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# SERMONS

UPON THE

MINISTRY, WORSHIP, AND DOCTRINES

OF THE

Protestant Episcopal Church.

BY

G: T. CHAPMAN, D.D.

LATE RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, LEXINGTON.

SEVENTH EDITION.



BOSTON:

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In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the  
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TO THE  
RIGHT REV. JOHN HENRY HOBART, D.D.  
BISHOP OF NEW YORK;

As a cordial tribute of esteem for his talents and learning ; of veneration for his piety and benevolence ; of applause for the unwearied zeal and ability, displayed by him, in discharging the arduous duties of the apostolick office ; and of admiration for the fervour and devotedness, with which he has identified his own pious determination, with the inspired vow of Isaiah, ‘For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth ;’

This Volume is respectfully inscribed,

BY THE

AUTHOR.





## P R E F A C E.

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IN submitting this volume to publick inspection, my motives appear in the body of the discourses, and to them the reader is referred, instead of being solicited to wade through a tedious preamble. Had I consulted mere literary reputation, their publication would have been delayed. My parochial and academical duties have made such large demands upon my time, that, to the composition of each discourse, I was unable to devote more than the labour of a single day, and the whole have been committed to the press, with no alterations, and very few additions. I do not present them as faultless specimens of style. In this aspect, neither do I challenge the severity of criticism, nor do I deprecate it. As no man is compelled to become an author, if he will write, let him be prepared to meet the consequences. It is better that he should receive a little wholesome chastisement, than that his works should contribute in any degree to vitiate the publick taste. The writer makes no humiliating appeals to the sympathy or forbearance of reader or critick.

It was, at the suggestion of a highly valued friend, that the sermons upon the church were prepared, and their delivery was accompanied with repeated requests for publication. I have complied. With what judgment, time will show. It has not been with reluctance. A mind, unstable as water, may well sit down and count the cost, attending the utterance of dubious speculations; but he must be the veriest coward, who is afraid to preach and to publish what he solemnly believes to be true, lest, for combating the errors, he should be obliged to endure the censures, of the many. I know not that the present discourses will be deemed worthy of a reply. Care, however, has been taken to notify me,

in a formal manner, that such was the intention. Be it so. When a temperate answer appears, I hope to embark, in the subsequent discussion, with benevolent and charitable feelings. I know that I shall do it in all the confidence of a certain faith, that the leading facts and arguments, presented in this volume, are utterly incapable of being refuted. Every thing plausible, that can be alleged in opposition, is perfectly familiar to my mind; and I have no difficulty in pledging myself to its exposure, wherever reason is permitted to triumph over prejudice, and religion over party. I only ask of my worthy Christian brethren of other denominations, those whom I esteem for their piety, I only ask, that they raise not the shout of victory until the battle is won.

The miscellaneous discourses have been selected in haste, from a large number, written at different periods. I am apprehensive that the choice of subjects may not have been as judicious as my friends could wish; but, such as they are, let them be considered the humble offering of my head and heart, in the glorious cause of Christ. If a favourable opinion should be formed of them, by the publick, they will, with the divine permission, be followed by others, embracing more extended views of Christian faith and practice.

LEXINGTON, KY. October 29, 1828.

# PREFACE

## TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE first publication of these discourses was intended as an experiment or effort, to ascertain how far the publick could become interested on subjects usually considered subordinate in value and dry in detail. To invite perusal, the popular style was adopted, and no greater space occupied with authorities, than was indispensable to a clear and comprehensive view of the argument maintained. I am satisfied with their reception. It far exceeds the most flattering anticipations I could have ventured to indulge. From many of the bishops, and other clergy, commendatory letters have been received, which have repaid me a thousand fold for the anxieties inseparable from a first attempt to win the approbation of an enlightened community.

But entertaining, as I do, the firm belief that God's own institutions must be better adapted, than those of men, to promote vital religion, and accelerate the triumph of the Redeemer's kingdom, it has afforded me the livelier satisfaction to possess abundant evidence, that these sermons have been instrumental in reclaiming large numbers from the ranks of schism, and bringing them within the benign influence of the bride, chosen by Christ himself, and, therefore, most worthy of all acceptance. I need not name a distinguished convert. His elaborate array of facts, the result of intense and unwearied application, has given him an elevated station among the champions of truth, and furnished the church with a vindication of her apostolick ministry, that will only be successfully answered, when the bible has ceased to be regarded as the revelation of the divine will.

Although the whole of the original preface has been reprinted

it will be perceived that the miscellaneous discourses have been omitted in the present volume. The object has been to diminish the price, and render the work more generally accessible. Additions, amounting altogether to about twelve pages, have been introduced in different places. Of these, I beg leave to direct the reader's attention to the conclusive proof of Timothy's apostleship, derived from the first epistle to the Thessalonians. It was discovered, by me, a few weeks after the former publication, and care was taken to make it publick; but my reading has not enabled me to detect its previous use, in any of the discussions, to which episcopacy has given rise. A similar remark applies to the testimony from Jerome, adduced on the seventy ninth page, and clearly falsifying numerous misrepresentations of that Father. The original follows, and in addition to the expression, 'by little and little,' the yet stronger phrase, 'in process of time,' is evidently brought within the age of the apostles, called by our Saviour in person; 'PAULATIM, TEMPORE PROCEDENTE, et alii ab his, quos Dominus elegerat, ordinati sunt apostoli: sicut ille ad Philippenses sermo declarat, dicens, necessarium existimavi Epaphroditum, ——— Apostolum vestrum, ——— mittere ad vos.'

It only remains for me to implore the divine blessing on my humble labours. Grant me, gracious God, so to understand and preach thy true and lively word, that I may, by thy mercy, not only gain converts to thy church on earth, but 'joint heirs with Christ' to thy kingdom of everlasting glory.

BURLINGTON, VT. July 10, 1832.



# SERMON I.

ISAIAH, lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

THE prophet, in the commencement of this chapter, breaks forth into the most sublime eulogy, and indulges in the liveliest anticipation of the future glory of the church of Christ. He predicts the arrival of the period when all nations should have cause to rejoice in her. 'The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory.' He bestows upon her no fulsome or vain panegyrick. 'Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.' He describes the final prosperity which is to attend her. 'Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for,' giving the signification of these terms, 'the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.' He foretells the ardent love which should be borne her by the ransomed of the Lord, and the Lord himself. 'For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.' He unfolds the future anxiety of her ministers to extol and glorify her, and her bridegroom, Christ, until she become the praise of all the earth. 'I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night.'

'The Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.'

These, however, brethren, are predictions that, as yet, are only in part fulfilled. The Bridegroom has indeed come, and with him his bride, the church. She has put on her beautiful garments, and furnished abundant evidence that she is 'all glorious within.' And still the world lieth in wickedness, still the great mass of mankind know nothing of the spouse of Jesus. They have not come to the wedding supper of the Lamb. They have not penetrated into her bridal chamber. Her more brilliant triumphs, her more extended conquests over the hearts of the sons and daughters of men, have yet to ensue. They have yet to bow before her shrine, and enable her, as a chaste bride, to present unto her Lord 'the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.'

When these glorious things, which are spoken of her, the city of the living God, are to be fully realized, I know not. I pretend not to unravel that web of prophecy which completely shuts out the future from the ken of mortal eyes, so far as precise dates, and times, and seasons are concerned. But this I know, that, in confident expectation of these things, such confidence as was produced by divine inspiration, Isaiah looked down the long tract of intervening ages to their accomplishment, and, even at the remote period in which he lived, determined, with the most ardent zeal, to contribute all in his power to effect it; all in his power to hasten, as it were, the approach of that truly auspicious era when all, from the greatest to the least, should be pervaded with the knowledge of the Lord, and be able to 'say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.' Hear his own solemn and impassioned vow: 'For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.'

I require no better authority to justify a similar vow on the part of the present watchmen upon the walls of the church, the present stewards of the manifold grace of God. The lapse of time should inflame, rather than cool, their ardour in a cause so holy and so good. As every day brings us nearer and nearer the consummation devoutly implored by the faithful in Christ Jesus, when the full-orbed splendour of the Sun of Righteousness shall shine upon the nations, and bring them out of darkness into marvellous light, so should there be greater and greater anxiety to be counted of God worthy of this calling, to fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.

As one of the most important preparatory steps, I have ever considered a closer union and harmony among Christians to be eminently desirable. For a long, long time, they have exhibited to the wondering eye of angels a sad and melancholy aspect. Their divine Lord and Master enjoined that they should love one another; but no people wrangle more. It was his counsel that they should attend to the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and faith; but no Jews were more tenacious of the mint, anise, and cumin, of the law. It was his command that they should learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart; that they should not judge, lest they be judged; but no Pharisee could have looked down upon a publican with greater disdain and self-complacency than the disciples of Jesus now do upon each other's attainments in the graces of religion. 'I am holier than thou,' is their most prominent motto; the spirit it engenders enters into all their actions, and furnishes but too much reason to the enemy to blaspheme, and say, 'See those Christians, how they hate one another.'

And now I ask you for the cause, the leading cause, of this strange and unnatural antipathy existing among those professing the same faith, having the same common Master, and looking to him alone for the mercy of God unto eternal life. You will reply, that it is to be traced to the region of the heart, to its still proverbial corruption, its wonderful inclination to retain something of its original taint; as if

it were possible to be too wise, too holy, and too happy, here below. And I acknowledge the justice of that reply; I have no idea of attempting to controvert it. 'Out of the heart,' says our Saviour, 'proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man.'

And yet it is apparent that, as in the natural, so in the moral world, secondary causes are continually producing their good and their bad effects. And in this point of view, was the question already suggested proposed to me, I should, and I do, answer, that the immediate active cause of all that dissension and disunion so prevalent among Christians is to be referred to gross departures from primitive, apostolick, and therefore divine institutions. They have proved the fruitful source of all error in doctrine, and all error in life and practice. They have made the multitude wiser than God, and the Christian part thereof wiser than Christ. How often, for example, do we hear natural religion preferred to revealed, by men who have found out that, while nature never contradicts herself, the scriptures, in the mouths of their warmest advocates, are made to speak variant doctrines, and to inculcate opposing practices! How often do we hear it asserted, by men of whom better things might be hoped, that the separation of Christians into different denominations is decidedly favourable to the advancement of religion, and the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom! I agree to the sincerity of their belief. I am far from intending to charge them with wilfully entertaining opinions hostile to the enlarged prosperity of Zion. But where do they get them? Where have they thus found out the mind of God? To the law and the testimony: show me some authority from them, and I may be induced to credit what I am now forced to consider visionary fancies and unfounded assertions. Show me that God approved the separation of the ten tribes from those of Judah and Benjamin, and the establishment of a new church, in which the priests of the house of Levi had no office and ministry. Show me that Christ highly applauded the divisions subsisting between the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and other Jewish sects, during



his eventful life. Show me that the apostles commended the schism of the Gnosticks, the Nicolaitans, and those who, in their time, perished in the gainsaying of Core. Show me this, and I will bow with reverence to the word of inspiration ; I will rejoice in the countless multitude of religious sects which exist in the present age.

But every attempt to point out such commendation would be utterly fruitless and vain. It is nowhere to be seen in the sacred volume ; it is nowhere, by anticipation, applied to the future, to a state of things resembling our own. Christ Jesus our Lord never says, Divide ye yourselves, my brethren, into divers parties and denominations ; in this way, ye shall the more successfully build up my church, and add to it daily of such as shall be saved. On the contrary, he tells them that ‘there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.’ He directs this prayer to heaven in their behalf, ‘Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.’ He submits this strong and conclusive argument to prove the necessity of union and concord, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.’

Nor did the apostles inculcate different sentiments. When they went about evangelizing the world, they did not set up, as our modern reformers, the church of John, the church of Peter, the church of James, and, from these names, bestow distinct appellations upon their several disciples. All these things have been the result of a new flood of light, unknown to them, as it was to the Master whom they served. They rather discountenanced all schism with as much zeal as they discountenanced all heresy. Ye cannot fail to remember how solemnly St. Paul, in particular, remonstrated with the Corinthians on this subject. How affectionately and earnestly he delivered unto them this counsel, ‘Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared

unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?' And, in a subsequent chapter, he rebukes them in these terms: 'Ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.'

Do you desire better evidence than this, brethren, to convince you of the danger of schism, and the extreme fallacy of imagining that our numerous Christian sects have a happy tendency in promoting the interests of religion? Paul does not condemn those Corinthians for imbibing unsound and heretical doctrines, such as are contrary to the true faith of Christ in the judgment of the modern orthodox. He speaks of them as believers. He says to them, 'All things are yours. And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' But for this he does condemn them; for this he does call them carnal; for commencing those very separations and divisions which are now so highly extolled; for doing precisely what Christians do in modern times; saying, I am of Calvin; and I of Munzer; and I of Wesley; and I of Fox; with innumerable others; Christians who, in this particular, take no warning from the explicit language of Paul, who never hear his yet whispering voice, emphatically asking, Is Christ divided? Was Calvin, or Munzer, or Wesley, or Fox, crucified for you?

I know, brethren, that I am now treading on tender ground; but the times require that I should speak out plainly and directly. It can never with justice be said of me, that I would gladly lay an interdict on the indulgence of any doctrines, or on the expression of any sentiments. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and.

according to that persuasion, let him preach, rebuke, and exhort; he shall receive no abuse, no molestation, from me. And what I accord to others I claim for myself, — the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; the liberty of honestly entertaining, and honestly and charitably publishing, my own views of Christian doctrines and Christian institutions, without being accountable to any human being, but to God alone. I do not question the piety of numerous individuals belonging to churches of human origin and invention; I do not assert, for my own conscience would condemn me if I did, that they cannot become the heirs of eternal life. I am rather sensible that the apostle applies to those divisions and parties which existed among the Corinthians this remarkable expression, ‘If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.’ And hence I abjure the thought of consigning to everlasting perdition large bodies of men, numbers of whom, I am happy to believe, live under the influence of the divine grace, and evince great advances in faith and holiness. But, at the same time, this does not convince me that there is no such sin as schism, however ignorantly it may be indulged; it does not abstract from the scriptures, nor from my faith, that memorable admonition of Paul, ‘There should be no schism in the body;’ and again, ‘Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular;’ that body which he elsewhere terms ‘the church,’ and affirms of Christ that ‘he is its head.’

No, no; I have no conception that liberality and candour towards others imply that we must embrace their errors, and renounce in their favour truths which have their foundation in the wisdom of God, and that are revealed to us and our children, that we may embrace them with a ready mind, and in the confidence of a certain faith. I rather look for divine authority in things which may have been originally indifferent; and, when I discover this, it is as obligatory upon me in relation to the external, as it is to the internal, concerns of the gospel. If Christ directed water to be used in baptism, it is not to be relinquished for another fluid. If he employed bread and wine as symbols

of his crucified body and blood, and commanded them to be taken in remembrance of him, they are not to be abandoned for other substances ; although, in either case, I am not prepared to say that a person baptized with milk, or communing upon flesh and milk, could not therefore be received up into glory.

And this train of reasoning is equally applicable to the church of Christ. If he, by his apostles, has established one, giving it such distinct and characteristick marks that it may be clearly discerned, and easily found, it is not for man to cast it aside, and, relying upon his own wisdom, proceed in forming another and another, just as caprice inclines, and peculiar views and partialities preponderate. Nor is that a good and valid argument to justify such a course which appeals to human sympathy and asserts, we are all aiming at the same result ; all these different roads terminate in the same heaven ; we shall agree there, however we may disagree here. I am rather of the prophet's mind : ' Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' I wish to learn what God himself hath ordained ; and, if the bible tells me this, I have no faith in the words or the things which man's wisdom teacheth ; I have no faith that he can improve upon the gospel, or upon the church of Christ.

We are told by some, that there is no such being as the devil, and no such place as hell ; that the Son of God was but a mere man, and that there is no virtue whatever in his alleged sacrifice and propitiation for sin. But, with me, one word from God destroys all these human fancies, and I am ready to exclaim with an apostle, ' Let God be true, and every man a liar.' We are told by others, Our church is as good, ay, it is better than yours ; it has discarded those higher orders of the clergy which lord it over God's heritage, and has banished all those popish forms and ceremonies which you so perversely retain. But when I look into the bible, and find it to be the very church established by the very God and the very Christ, I call to remembrance the words of David, ' If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.'



I am animated, as I trust, by the same spirit which dwelt upon the lips, and glowed within the heart, of Isaiah: 'For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.'

Too much, indeed, of worldly wisdom appears to exist among Christians. The children of light have succeeded in becoming as wise, in their day and generation, as the children of this world. Nothing is more common than to hear them talk of pleasing men more by this method than by that; of adopting new paths rather than the old, because they harmonize more with the prevailing impulse of publick opinion. It is not so much what God says, and Christ says, but what will the publick say? how will the publick think? and what probability of success is to be entertained, not from relying upon God, but from yielding, to a greater or less degree, to the known prejudices and infirmities of men? Our Saviour, for example, enjoins upon his disciples, 'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.' 'But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.' But now, as if entirely dissatisfied with this divine regulation, long lists of charitable donors to missionary and other societies are continually published to the world, on the ground of expediency; on the ground of encouraging others to give, from the expectation of having their names as generally known and extensively circulated. But for my part, brethren, I do most solemnly protest against these implied improvements of the word of God. It is doing evil that good may come out of it; it is but a new version of the old doctrine, ascribed to the papists, that the end sanctifies the means. I am the advocate of missionary, the advocate of bible societies; but let them be conducted in strict conformity to the plain injunctions of the scriptures, and without that manifest distrust of Providence which such measures do not fail to indicate.

Similar remarks apply to female exhibitions in publick ; they are becoming more and more common, and are supposed to produce better and better effects. In vain does the apostle, in his epistle to the Corinthians, require ; ‘ Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak ; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home ; for it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church.’ The rule is often transgressed without fear and without compunction. Paul’s authority is regarded as little as his Master’s. We have enthusiasts who arrogate to themselves the right of rejecting the express words of scripture. Policy is their plea, although every sober and reflecting mind must be satisfied that the only true policy in religion is to be found in reverent obedience to the oracles of God, even when they give directions apparently inimical to its increased prosperity. ‘ My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.’

And these sentiments I cherish to the same extent in relation to the primitive church. Founded by its divine Head, I can never consent to abandon it for churches that have grown up within the memory of man, or whose claims to antiquity are bounded by the history of two or three centuries. I can tell you the fallible men by whom they were devised, the places where they were first established, and the gradual progress they have made in stealing away the hearts of the people from the one only bride of Christ. But for her, if ye wish to learn her origin, ye must go to the gospels and epistles. She has her foundation upon the Rock of Ages ; and other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid. She may be despised and rejected of men ; it was the fate of the Bridegroom himself. But let them do this, or whatsoever else it may please them, they can never induce him to repudiate her ; they can never prevail with him to accept a second bride, in preference to ‘ the church ’ which ‘ he loved, and gave himself for it ; that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word ; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish.’

From these observations, brethren, you must perceive that the present discourse is merely introductory to a series upon the same subject, which I propose to deliver on the morning of as many sabbaths as may be necessary to complete them, and in which I design to give as condensed a view as possible of the apostolick church, at whose altar it is my happiness to minister ; those features, I mean, which serve to distinguish her from the various protestant denominations of our country. By the divine blessing, I will prove from the scriptures her divine origin. I will show that her three orders in the ministry, and particularly the episcopal order, spring from the same holy and unerring wisdom. I will endeavour to convince you that, in some other important particulars, such as the holy rite of confirmation, and the use of precomposed forms of prayer in the publick worship of God, she conforms closely to the pattern of heavenly things exhibited in the sacred volume.

Nor shall I omit the testimony of the Christian fathers ; of those men who either lived in company with the apostles, or who succeeded them in the ministry during the first centuries of the Christian era. Many of their writings yet remain ; and from them it will appear that no other church but our own was ever heard of by those who first believed in Christ. They had the same three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, in the ministry ; and of these, bishops alone possessed the power of ordination. It was neither claimed nor exercised by others. It would have been deemed unscriptural and unauthorized ; a usurpation of power never granted by the great Head of the church, and therefore conferring none of the attributes of his ministers, no authority to preach the word, or administer the ordinances of the gospel.

In performing this service, in which it will be necessary to examine every supposed objection, to recur to the records of history, and to speak freely, though, I hope, discreetly and advisedly, I shall be guided by a sense of duty, by a desire to put you in possession of every material fact required to arrive at a correct decision in your own minds, and by the expectation of its contributing, in some degree, however slight, to the prosperity of a church built upon

the foundation of the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. It ought not to excite unpleasant feelings in any bosom. It is not intended to excite them. My great object is to inculcate the principles of the church among those who compose my own congregation. Religious controversy I ever have, and ever shall, deprecate. But the fair, open, manly, and peaceable investigation of truth must not be denied to the Christian minister; and this I shall adopt and pursue, in a manner as unexceptionable as my own infirmities and the nature of the subject will allow. It certainly does lead me to the conclusion that ministers who are not episcopally ordained are acting as such without any lawful authority; but this has always been the doctrine of the church, and, as is also contended, the doctrine of the apostles and primitive Christians. Whether I shall be able to satisfy you on these points must be left to your own future judgment. In the mean time, give me your patient attention, and be determined to embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, however it may comport with, or contradict, opinions already formed.

Amid the multitude of sects into which the mystical body of Christ our Saviour is now rent and divided, a circumstance so foreign from his doctrine, and so opposed to the holy counsels of his apostles, it surely must be an object of extreme solicitude, to every honest and sincere believer in him, to ascertain where his ministers rightfully exercise the functions of the priesthood, where they rightfully preach, and baptize, and celebrate the supper of the Lord. You shall know, as far as my humble powers and diligent examination will allow me to promise. It is a topick to which I have already devoted many hours of calm, dispassionate study; and the result has confirmed me in the opinion that schism is the greatest curse of Christendom; that it is attended with more fatal consequences than the united attacks of infidelity and vice; and that the world will never be converted to Christianity, until its present professors discard their existing animosities and divisions, and cordially unite together in the church which is thus described by St. Paul: 'There is one body, and one Spirit: even as ye are called in one hope of your

calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism.' 'For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free.'

May God, therefore, of his infinite mercy, direct us into that church, whether it be presbyterian, or baptist, or methodist, or episcopal. May he possess all Christian people with light to discern, and readiness of mind to embrace it. The wounds of many festering hearts would be healed. The jealousies of many bitter partisans of rival standards would subside. The joy of all the faithful and godly in these denominations, and many of other communions, would abound. Peace and order would be substituted for rancour and strife, for confusion and every evil work. In due time, the heathen would hear of it, and be glad. The news would be wafted upon the wings of the wind. Messengers of grace and love would carry it to them in every direction. There would be none to molest or to make them afraid, convinced, as all men would necessarily be, by this happy fulfilment of the sure word of prophecy ; convinced, as all men would be, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigned ; that the Zion of his beloved Son was indeed deserving the praise of the whole earth ; and that 'her righteousness ought to go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.' AMEN.

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## SERMON II.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

THE ardent affection and zeal for the welfare of Zion and Jerusalem, expressed in these words by the prophet



Isaiah, combined with the object of these discourses, already announced, render it proper to remark that the two names are equally applicable to the church of the living God.

Zion signifies 'a monument raised,' 'a heap of stones set up;' Jerusalem, 'the vision of the perfect, or of the pacifick;' 'the vision of peace, or the possession, or the inheritance of peace.' The latter name was given to the city of David, which contained the temple of the Lord God of Israel, and the former was applied to the mountain upon which it was built. 'Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,' says the psalmist, 'is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.' Its application to the Jewish church pervades the old testament; and in the new, the apostle Paul applies it from Isaiah to the Christian: 'As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.' He also speaks of 'Jerusalem which now is,' and of 'Jerusalem which is above;' in this manner designating the church militant and the church triumphant.

In perfect coincidence with the language and feelings of Isaiah, I may therefore express the warmth of my attachment to what I believe to be the true apostolick church, in his own devout and fervid vow: 'For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.'

The scriptures of the new testament are, indeed, full of encomiums upon the organized society of the disciples of Jesus, which is there emphatically described as the church. Having reminded you of several upon the last sabbath, I shall merely recite, upon the present occasion, the solemn declaration of our Lord to one of his apostles: 'And I say also unto thee, 'That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' The object is not to contend against the peculiar interpretation of this passage main-

tained by our fellow-Christians of the Roman catholick persuasion; but in every attempt to discuss a controverted subject, it is important to understand the precise import of terms. What, then, did our Saviour mean, in this celebrated text, by his church? It has been defined, an assembly of faithful men, of believers, of true Christians. But the definition is not strictly correct; for Judas belonged to it during our Lord's ministry; Simon Magus was baptized into it by Philip, one of the seven deacons; and, among other parables, Jesus put forth one, in which he described it as a field containing wheat and tares, and said, 'Let both grow together until the harvest.' So that to speak of his church, as comprising those only among the various denominations of Christians whom God shall perceive and acknowledge to be faithful and true, is directly at variance with this description, and the two examples which have been adduced.

I prefer, therefore, a more scriptural explanation. I prefer to consider that portion of men who have submitted to the holy rite of baptism, as constituting the body of Christ's church, no matter what may be the real state of their hearts and affections. This can be known to him only who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins. But that which is visible is known to us. On the one side, we have the world, and on the other, those that have been taken from it, and sacramentally admitted into the church, of which Christ is the head, because he purchased it with his blood, and because it is a kingdom over which he exercises supreme power and authority.

The great, the all-important question remains, however, to be discussed. Baptism is undoubtedly the initiatory rite, or sacrament, by which we enter the visible fold of Christ; but how is that fold itself established? Where resides the instrumental power of conferring its gracious privileges upon the sons and daughters of men?

Will you tell me, brethren, that any man, or set of men, can perform all this, in virtue of their own free will and pleasure? It would be a very popular doctrine, and would harmonize wonderfully well with that spirit of freedom which built up, and still perpetuates, our political insti-

tutions. And no man can honour that spirit, or love those institutions, more than the preacher of to-day. Most cheerfully and most heartily do I recognise the principle, that, in the civil concerns of this life, all power and sovereignty reside, and of right ought to reside, in the people. They can form what government they choose, and they can alter it when they choose; whenever, indeed, the happiness and prosperity of the larger number loudly demand a change. Herein they are the sole judges and the sole rulers. The Almighty hath set no limits to their power, except that it be exercised in justice and equity. 'Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.'

While, however, I am thus anxious to range myself on the side of those who zealously maintain the political rights and privileges of mankind on the subject of self-government, I am no such enthusiast in favour of human liberty as to imagine that it can justly arrogate to itself the smallest original authority, where God hath expressly reserved it to himself. Popular or not popular, Christ Jesus is, with me, King in Zion, and Lord of all. 'Thy throne,' O Christ, 'is forever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' And that throne and that sceptre, the throne and sceptre of a kingdom which is spiritual, which he himself declared was not of this world; these he hath never relinquished; these he never will relinquish, until, in the language of Paul, 'the end cometh, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.'

I desire no plainer testimony than this, to prove the inability of mere men to establish his church, and commission his ambassadors, as they would establish a new form of government, and commission its executive, legislative, and judicial officers. For this purpose, they have neither warrant nor example from the scriptures. The Jewish church and priesthood were the result of divine

appointment alone; and the Christian stand upon the same foundation. 'Jesus came and spake unto' the eleven disciples, 'saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

You perceive, brethren, by the very terms of this commission, that it was limited in its nature, and in the privileges which it conferred. Our Saviour did not address mankind at large. Here is no authority conveyed to Jewish doctors, those who officiated in Jewish synagogues, to go about evangelizing the world, and baptizing their converts into his spiritual fold. It is not conveyed to the best of them, to Gamaliel, to Nicodemus, to Joseph of Arimathea, much less to the worst. It is not even conveyed to the seventy disciples, whom he had before elected, and sent abroad on errands of miraculous grace and virtue; but to the eleven, and the eleven alone. Had others acted under it, it would have been a manifest usurpation of ungranted power; it would have been a violation of Christ's ordinance, and would have subjected the offender, perhaps, to the same punishment which afterwards befell Ananias and Sapphira.

No separation of individuals to a specifick office and ministry could, indeed, be more solemn and imposing. It was performed by our Lord in person, after his resurrection from the dead, and, even under these circumstances, was not fully completed. They were still to remain at Jerusalem, and wait for the promise of the Father. They were still to elect another to take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell. They were still to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, before they could venture to act as ambassadors for Christ. And does this look as if their rights and privileges might be assumed by others, at pleasure? Does this look as if any person, upon his own mere motion, or guided by some fancied call from God, could presume to exercise gifts and graces thus solemnly and authoritatively con-

ferred? To me, it speaks a very different language. To me, it reserves all original and inherent power to Christ. It confers it, after a delegated manner only, upon the eleven, and confides to them the responsible office of being his ministers to the uttermost parts of the earth; of preaching his gospel, and founding his church, wherever there were eyes to see, and ears to hear, and souls to save.

To what has been already advanced, I have therefore to remind you, that in every correct definition of a church, you must invariably associate with it the idea of officers deriving their authority from its great head, and by him empowered to discharge its ministry, and perpetuate its existence. In this particular, it corresponds with all societies of human invention. You never heard of one without its appropriate officers. Its very existence depends upon them. The moment it is formed, they are chosen. Without some presiding power, every thing relating to it would be involved in inextricable anarchy and confusion. It would be thus with all literary and humane societies. It would be thus with all the governments upon the earth. Our own would cease to exist, if there were no longer any provision for the election and appointment of men to administer it according to the constitution and the laws. You are even aware, that with us, they must be elected with certain qualifications, and after a prescribed form and manner, or the nation would regard them in the light of usurpers, and refuse obedience to their illegitimate authority. Nor was the church of Christ deemed, by its divine founder, of less value and importance than the societies and governments of this world. He has rather given to it an authorized ministry. He has rather promised to be with it 'always, even unto the end of the world.'

And now comes the question of greatest moment to those who would enlist under the banners of the true apostolick church, and the ministry it has received of the Lord Jesus. A vast multitude of sects are known to claim it. But as we have already seen, that it is one, and 'that there should be no schism in the body,' in other words no sects, where is it to be found? I answer, wherever



the officers in question are duly called and ordained, wherever, according to the institution of the apostles, endued with power from on high, there are these three orders in the ministry; deacons, authorized to preach the gospel and baptize; priests or presbyters, having the additional authority to commemorate the death and sufferings of Christ, in the holy eucharist; and bishops, who alone possess the greater power of celebrating the holy rites of confirmation and ordination. And to convince you, that this is the doctrine of our protestant episcopal church, I shall here recite the twenty-third article of her creed. 'It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of publick preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have publick authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard.'

In the preface to her ordination services, she is still more explicit, and declares, 'It is evident unto all men diligently reading holy scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's church, bishops, priests, and deacons. Which offices were evermore had in such reverend estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by publick prayer, with imposition of hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful authority. And therefore, to the intent that these orders may be continued, and reverently used and esteemed in this church, no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful bishop, priest, or deacon, in this church, or suffered to execute any of the said functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto, according to the form hereafter following, or hath had episcopal consecration or ordination.'

It is scarcely possible to conceive of language more plain and unequivocal than this. It conveys opinions

entirely coincident with my own. An episcopalian upon principle, I do most sincerely and conscientiously believe them. Not, however, because they have been drawn up by divines eminent for their piety, and renowned for their theological learning: but because they have their foundation in the scriptures of truth, and are susceptible of a defence as solid and substantial as those scriptures themselves. You must bear with me, brethren, while I pursue it; while I endeavour to convince you upon this subject, as I am myself convinced, by a species of evidence that, taken as a whole, amounts to the demonstration produced by figures, which cannot lie. If there be any failure, with minds open to rational conviction, it must result from the weakness of the advocate, and not from the absence of ample proof to be gained from the bible, and most triumphantly corroborated by the written testimony of the primitive fathers of the church.

A good logician often commences a train of reasoning with the least satisfactory argument, gradually proceeding to the more powerful and convincing: and, determined as I am to be very full, as well as free, in this discussion, I shall adopt the same method, and maintain, in the first instance, the scriptural origin of the ministry of the church, upon the ground of analogy.

You are probably aware of the almost universal opinion prevailing among Christians, concerning types and antitypes. Types, in the clerical language, are emblems, by which something future is prefigured, and antitypes constitute whatever, when it actually transpires, is thus prefigured. The former are found in the old testament, the latter in the new. Abel, for example, was a type of Christ, and is so accounted by the apostle, who tells us, that 'the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel.' The intended sacrifice, by Abraham, of his only son Isaac, is another, and evidently shadows forth the future sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God, upon the accursed tree, in order to secure the redemption of the world, and the forgiveness of sins. St. Paul, indeed, assures us, in general terms, that 'the law was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the

things.' And this, too, at the very time that he is speaking of the priesthood of Christ, and the offering up of his body upon the cross once for all.

It is, consequently, very generally admitted, that all the Mosaick institutions were typical of the Christian; that we have rites and ceremonies in the Christian which exactly correspond with those ordained of God to be used in the Jewish church. Baptism affords a familiar and well-known illustration. It comes in the place of circumcision, and, as such, is frequently referred to by the sacred writers, and by Christ himself, when, reproving the blindness of Nicodemus, for not comprehending baptism, as the instituted mode of admission into his spiritual kingdom, he asks, 'Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?' Is your memory so treacherous as to forget, that, by circumcision, you have been personally admitted a member of the church of Israel?

The Lord's supper is another. It answers to the feast of the passover among the Jews. It was even instituted by our Saviour, when he was commemorating that ancient rite, and is expressly recognised by St. Paul, as being established in its room. 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.'

With these remarkable coincidences existing between the churches of the old and new dispensations, we might, therefore, brethren, very naturally look for another resemblance in the order of men who were set apart to administer the respective sacraments of the law and gospel. And we have it. In the Jewish church, there were three orders in the ministry, the high priest, priest, and levite; the first having greater dignity and power than the second, and the second than the third. In the Christian church, the same distinction in relation to number and authority has always obtained. It was thus during the actual ministry of Christ. He himself occupied the first rank, the twelve apostles the second, and the seventy disciples the third.

And, certainly, this argument, founded upon analogy, upon the types and antitypes of the scriptures, derives peculiar force from the consideration, that our blessed Saviour is perpetually described, in the epistle to the Hebrews, by the very name which was applied to the chief minister among the Jews. 'Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;' and again, 'Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' Here also we are to bear in mind, that as among the Jews, so in this case, the very name of High Priest implied superiority in station, that there must be inferior priests; and these, as you have seen, were not wanting to complete the analogy contended for. They existed in the persons of the apostles and of the seventy disciples.

And now I ask, Was all this a matter of accident, or of design? A matter of accident, that Paul called our Saviour a High Priest, and that he himself selected two separate classes of inferior ministers, the one for his constant, the other for his occasional, attendants? To me, it most clearly shows the actual accomplishment of Paul's declaration, that the law was a shadow of good things to come; a shadow, amongst other particulars, of the church, the sacraments, and the priesthood of the gospel. For accident, I abjure the word, as applicable to any thing performed under the auspices of Christ. For design, I embrace it on ground which cannot be shaken, the accommodation of the new to the old dispensation, in every instance where purely spiritual things were prefigured. The sacraments of the Christian church are not more essential to its existence, than is its priesthood. If a comparison must be formed, they are evidently of minor importance. For 'how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except

they be sent? If the former, then, were typified, why not the latter? Why this supposed distinction between the sacramental means of grace and the individuals authorized to administer them? The truth is, there is none. It never did, and it never can, exist. Unless you blend together the High Priest of our profession, the apostles, and seventy disciples, unless you deny that there was any official difference of rank between them, I have satisfactorily proved, that our Saviour Christ had an eye to the three orders in the Jewish hierarchy, when, at this early period, he contemplated the future establishment of his own more glorious church and ministry.

But at length he, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, was taken, and, by wicked hands, was crucified and slain. And being dead and buried, in three days, he was 'declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.' The period had therefore arrived for the final settlement of his visible church. For the space of forty days previous to his ascension into heaven, he gave, according to the Acts, 'commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen;' 'speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.' The investigation of their nature and import I shall commence on the succeeding sabbath; and greatly shall I be mistaken, if they do not afford, when combined with the subsequent practice of the apostles, in the propagation of the gospel, greatly shall I be mistaken, if they do not afford unanswerable proof of the sole validity of an episcopal government and ministry in the church of Christ.

I am, however, free to confess, in relation to that branch of it, in which it has become my office to minister in holy things, that I love it most for the doctrines which it maintains; the doctrines which are according to godliness. Here there has been no discrepancy upon fundamental principles from the beginning, and I trust and believe that there will be none to the end. While many other denominations, growing out of the reformation in religion witnessed in the sixteenth century, have been inconstant and variable as the wind, a long and uninterrupted dis-



semination of evangelical truth has distinguished the annals of the church. Like the laws of the Medes and Persians, her articles change not. Like the Author of that gospel from which they are taken, they may be characterized as 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.'

If you have been deeply smitten with any of the countless heresies which have deformed the Christian world, you can find no encouragement to enter, or continue, within her pale. If you have been wrought up to some alarming pitch of religious phrensy, in which the feelings have been more inflamed than the judgment enlightened, here there are no enthusiastick strains of devotion to keep alive the excitement, and no fanatick appeals, calculated to bewilder, and then completely desolate, the understanding. If you wish to cherish foul antipathies, to make your fellow Christians the objects of scorn and odium, the butts of ridicule and derision, here is no food to supply the evil passions of your nature, and no such bigotry as to exclude from offices of love and brotherly kindness a single individual of that human family for which Christ our Saviour died. If you desire to confide in a barren faith, in an orthodox belief of doctrines, which are to have no salutary operation upon your lives, producing in you sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, here you can obtain no countenance; here your faith in Jesus must work by love, and spend itself in good deeds, or ye can have no part nor lot in this matter. We renounce the hollow hearted Christian, and would earnestly strive to be built up in true knowledge, faith, and holiness, unto salvation.

But, if there be a sorrowing penitent in this assembly; one who feels the intolerable weight of his sins, and would fain cast them off, as a sore burden, too heavy to be borne; one who sincerely believes in Jesus, and in the sole efficacy of his atonement; one who so understands his religion as to be conscious that he must adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things, fashioning his life after his example, and making it his invariable rule to be holy as he was holy, and pure as he was pure; here he may find, in the ark of Christ's own church, a refuge from the impending deluge of the divine displeasure; here

he may become a Christian, upon principles that are sound and practical; here his devotion may be pure, his faith rational, his obedience perfect, and the final recompense of his reward ensured, without boasting, without thinking himself better than other men, without straining at the gnats and swallowing the camels of vice and error.

Yes, brethren, for these things it is that I most love the church to which I belong. I love her for her moderate views, her chastened worship, her scriptural doctrines, and the catholic spirit of forbearance and good will towards others, which she would gladly inculcate upon the members of her communion. Wonder not, therefore, that I am anxious to make you episcopalians upon principle, nor think it strange that I should attach so much importance to an episcopal government and ministry, when I do most solemnly believe that, to this very reception of, and continuance in, the apostolick faith and practice, we are mainly indebted, under God, for all those spiritual blessings and privileges, which have for so many ages been abundantly showered down upon our Zion; for all those fair proportions and unrivalled beauties, which the towering edifice of her faith and holiness presents, and that must, at some future period, cause her to be universally hailed as the joy of the whole earth; her righteousness, according to the prophet's prediction, having previously gone forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. AMEN.

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## SERMON III.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

I HAVE now arrived at that stage in the discussion upon church government, when it will be necessary to be a

little more explicit upon the true nature of the question, which has for about three centuries agitated the Christian world.

Let it be remembered, then, that the terms episcopalian and presbyterian are properly and legitimately applied to the government or ministry of a church, rather than to the particular doctrines or form of worship, which it embraces. An episcopalian is one who believes in the divine institution of three orders in the Christian ministry, having an *ἐπίσκοπος* or bishop for the first and highest. A presbyterian denies this distinction of three orders, and contends that there is but one, the order of a *πρεσβύτερος* or presbyter, meaning the same with our English word elder. And I mention this circumstance with the view of removing an erroneous impression, existing in the minds of many, that the advocates of episcopacy are few in number, and, on this account, somewhat arrogant in their pretensions; when, in reality, were you to divide the Christian world into twenty equal parts, eighteen, if not nineteen, twentieths would be found ranged on our side of this important question.

The Roman catholicks, wherever situated; the very extensive denomination called the Greek church, in Russia and Turkey in Europe, and in some parts of Asia, including the Holy Land itself; the Armenians, also, of Asia; the Abyssinians of Africa; the Swedish, and many of the German Lutherans; such as belong to the established churches in England and Ireland, with a respectable church in Scotland; all these, brethren, are as much episcopalians as we are; they maintain as strongly the apostolick institution of episcopacy, and reject as openly every other form of church government, because, in their opinion, founded solely upon the basis of human authority. I might add to this catalogue the large and zealous body of Christians scattered over our own country, and the land of our fathers, known by the name of methodists, who are episcopalians in principle; although, for reasons which will hereafter be briefly submitted, we are constrained to consider them unpossessed of the requisite authority, in other words, of what we claim to be a valid episcopal ministry.

Nor must I fail to remark, that the great body of sece-

ders from the church, have the same common right to a common feature in their ecclesiastical polity. Presbyterianism, so far as one order of ministers, and one only, is concerned, includes the baptist, the congregational, the unitarian, the universalist, and other churches, as well as the highly respected portion of believers who have chosen to designate themselves by that particular title. They are all the advocates of ministerial parity or equality; we, on the contrary, of imparity, or inequality. They assert, that there is but one order of ministers in Christ's church, all having the same power and authority. We say, that there are three orders, and that these are so arranged, that the lower cannot perform the prescribed duties of the higher.

Bear, therefore, this statement in your memories. It is what civilians would term the very gist of the controversy. By it I am willing to stand or fall, in the appeal which I shall make to the testimony of the scriptures. If episcopacy does not meet with full and decisive authority there, I am content to abandon it, or, at least, to retain it on the ground of expediency alone. For if God has instituted no peculiar system of ordaining and perpetuating the ministerial servants of Christ, it must be obvious to every reflecting mind, that we are left to our own choice and discretion; that we are, in fact, authorized by him to found what church or what churches we please, and to appoint over them what minister or ministers it seemeth to us good. To this liberty I could not urge one single objection. I would agree to it most heartily, and most conscientiously. But hath God said, and shall we not do it? This is the question. Hath God given to his Son but one church for his bride, and shall we dare to present him with many? Shall we dare to tender him a kind of divine polygamy, and please ourselves with the idea that he himself is as highly pleased and gratified with the offer? St. Paul, in his time, would have exclaimed, 'God forbid!' and I love to be of the party of Paul; I love the church that he loved, and in her defence would freely exhaust my feeble powers of argument and persuasion.

In my last discourse, I closed with the strong probability in favour of our three orders in the ministry, derived

from the striking analogies subsisting between the Jewish and Christian churches : and, miles I, showed that the high priest, priests, and levites of the former were typical of the High Priest of our profession, the apostles, and seventy disciples, whom he early gathered about his person. I also reminded you of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and proposed to bring forward, on the present occasion, the principal subject which appeared to occupy his thoughts and conversation, during the forty days immediately preceding his glorious ascension into heaven. It was his church. All Christians concur in this opinion, and are ready to admit that at this time he did commission his apostles to establish it upon the earth, whenever, indeed, they were directed to propagate the gospel of the kingdom.

The words of that commission I shall not now repeat, as there will be occasion to use them hereafter ; but rather turn your attention to a position that must command implicit belief from all who truly reverence the character and authority of our Saviour ; who acknowledge that he was the Son of God, and the messenger of his grace to the children of men. It is this : Whatever the apostles did, in virtue of the commission of their Lord, to preach the gospel and baptize all nations, and after they were endued with power from on high, by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, in the shape of cloven tongues, as of fire ; whatever they thus did, in relation to the church and its ministry, is equally binding and imperative upon us, as if it had been performed by our blessed Saviour in person. A contrary doctrine would destroy the inspiration, and consequently the authority of the four gospels, and of all the epistles, inasmuch as they were composed subsequently to his ascension. We should have nothing certain, nothing true : no baptism, no supper of the Lord, no ministry, no church, no cross of Christ, in a word, no religion. But the Holy Ghost was given to them, that they might be guarded from all error : their divine Lord promised to be with them always, that their acts might be his, and command the reverence and submission of mankind on his, and not on their, authority.



Hence, when Peter, in company with John, had healed the lame man, and the multitude around greatly wondered, he addressed them in these words: 'Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus;' 'And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know.' Paul, also, in writing to the Corinthians, concerning the ministry received by himself and his brethren, expressly asserts, 'that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.' 'Now then,' he continues, 'we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' And again, speaking of the holy eucharist, and the proper spirit and manner in which it should be celebrated, 'I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.' By such strong and convincing language, we therefore easily perceive the interpretation given by the apostles to the command of Christ, 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.' They attempted nothing but through his power. They did nothing but what he had expressly directed them to do.

Let us examine, then, the ministry they established, and see if it does not in all particulars correspond with our own, with the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, and not with the one order of presbyters or elders. I shall begin with the lowest, because its investigation will not require as much time as the highest or episcopal rank. In the ordination service of deacons, the ordaining bishop addresses the candidate in these words: 'It appertaineth to the office of a deacon, in the church where he shall be appointed to serve, to assist the priest in divine service, and specially when he ministereth the holy communion, and to help him in the distribution thereof; and to read holy scriptures and homilies,' meaning sermons, 'in the church; and to instruct the youth in the cate-

chism; in the absence of the priest to baptize infants; and to preach, if he be admitted thereto by the bishop. And, furthermore, it is his office, where provision is so made, to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish, to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell, unto the curate, that by his exhortation they may be relieved with the alms of the parishioners, or others. Will you do this gladly and willingly?' To which the candidate answers, 'I will so do by the help of God.'

But where is the authority for all this; for ordaining a deacon, and specifying these duties as appertaining to his office? I find it in various parts of the new testament, and particularly in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the apostles, to whose minute recital I must necessarily claim your indulgent attention. 'And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.'

And now, in justification of our church, if it should be asked, Why do you ordain deacons? It appears, that the apostles appointed men to this office and ministry, 'and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.' If it should be asked, Why do you call them deacons? They were *διακονοι*, that is, to 'serve' tables; and deacon, from the Greek word *διακονος*, signifies a servant, while Paul, in his epistle to Timothy, gives him certain direc-

tions about 'the office of a deacon.' If it should be asked, Why should they attend to the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish, where provision is made for their relief, as it is with us, by alms contributed at the holy communion, where deacons assist the priest in distributing the bread and wine, thus serving at the highest of all tables, the table of the Lord? It is in conformity to the original cause of their appointment, the 'murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.' If it should be asked, Why are they permitted to read sermons in the church, and to instruct youth in the catechism, and to preach the gospel, if admitted thereto by the bishop, as is always done? It is because the first seven deacons were to be men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, and because it is said, immediately after their ordination, that Stephen, one of their number, 'full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people,' so that 'certain of the synagogue,' 'disputing with' him, 'were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake;' and, afterwards, for the very reason that he persisted in preaching, the people, whom they stirred up, stoned him to death, 'calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' If it should be asked, Why are they allowed to baptize, as well as to preach? It will be found, in the eighth chapter of the Acts, that Philip, another of the seven deacons, 'went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them;' and 'when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.' If it should be asked, Was not the office temporary in its nature, and not designed to be perpetuated in the church of Christ? I answer, that it was first established, because 'the number of the disciples was multiplied,' and that this reason for its existence is far more obvious at present, than it was at the period of its original institution. I also find that, long after this, Paul addressed one of his epistles 'to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.' I find in another, directed to 'Tim-

othy, that he writes, 'Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.' And to show that they were to be admitted by him to this ministry, Paul adds, 'Let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.'

And now, brethren, it is my turn to ask, if I have not here presented you with a body of scriptural evidence upon this subject, which is utterly at variance with the modern idea of there being but one order of Christ's ministers? If I have not shown you, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the office of a deacon, as exercised in our church, is conformable in every particular to the model furnished by the apostles, and by them intended to guide and control the practice of Christians to remotest time? It has been thus with episcopalians in every age and nation, and you cannot but perceive that they have ample authority from the source of all authority to justify their course.

What right, then, have men to build up churches where this office is not recognised, or, if recognised, only by name; a name which you know is arbitrary in its nature, and that of itself signifies nothing? It is office that confers right and power, the lawful, prescribed acts of those who hold it, which serve to distinguish them from all other individuals. Tell me not, then, that there are deacons in the churches to which I refer, as well as among episcopalians. Those churches do not allow them to be ministers of the gospel, for this would add a second order to their ministry, and prove an obvious surrender of their favourite doctrine, that there should be but one. Tell me not of such nominal deacons. They are not the deacons of the scriptures; they do not baptize, as did Philip; they do not preach the gospel, as did Philip and Stephen; they are not separated to this office and ministry, by the imposition of hands, as were all those ordained by the apostles.

And what right, I repeat, what authority is there for this extraordinary innovation upon the original constitution of the church? I reply that there is none. None,

except that which is to be traced to the caprice and invention of men. None, which would not equally justify us in abolishing the two sacraments of the gospel, as some denominations of Christians have already done. None, which would not fairly warrant the remark, if we had no personal knowledge of them, that some Christians appear to consider themselves wiser than the apostles, better acquainted than they were with the mind of Christ, and therefore disposed to mould the church, and its ministry, in accordance with their happier views and sounder judgment.

I regret to be obliged to speak thus plainly and decisively; but the cause of truth and of Christ imperatively requires it. I am for rendering honour to whom honour is due. I know, and am persuaded, that there is a large amount of piety and devotion to religion, clearly discernible among those who reject what we esteem to be the ministry instituted under the direction of our Saviour Christ. But still, none of these things move me to abandon it; none of these prevail with me to give in my adhesion to any body of believers, however respectable, who have renounced the holy office of a deacon, as it was instituted and maintained in the apostolick and primitive age. He who departs in one respect from such institutions, sets a dangerous example to others to depart in many. So long as it is practised, there can be no reasonable hope of holding 'the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.'

But to proceed: The second order of ministers in our church is that to which we apply, indiscriminately, the names of priest, presbyter, and elder. They are taken from the lowest order, upon the principle advanced by St. Paul; 'they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree;' in other words, are worthy of promotion. Their ordination is frequently mentioned in the scriptures. Paul and Barnabas, 'when they had ordained them elders,' *ἡγούμενους*, 'in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.' And many other passages of the same import might be easily adduced.



But it is not necessary. The institution of this office by the apostles is not denied. There is here no difference of opinion between us and our brethren of other churches. All admit its original existence; they, however, contending that it is the only order of Christ's ministers; we, that it is the second, that it is subordinate to that of bishops, and without any valid authority to perform the rite of ordination.

So far, therefore, brethren, I have established by clear and unanswerable proof, first, the apostolick office of a deacon; and second, by admission, as well as proof, the equally apostolick office of a presbyter, or priest. I come, therefore, to the more interesting question, Was there another? In one point of view, there are none that can or that do deny it. For the twelve apostles were all living at the time that they ordained elders in every church, and laid their hands upon the seven deacons. And, as their office is universally acknowledged to have been superiour to either of the others, it would appear that, during their existence at least, the analogy drawn from the Jewish priesthood is perfect and entire, wanting nothing. The apostle was the antitype of the high priest; the elder, of the priest; and the deacon, of the levite.

But the opponents of episcopacy assert that the apostolick office died with the twelve, and with Paul, called to be an apostle in a miraculous manner. We, on the contrary, most earnestly and zealously contend against this supposed termination of their office. We maintain, as all antiquity were accustomed to maintain, that it still exists in the person of every regularly ordained bishop. And although, in such of your number as may have bestowed little attention to the constitution of the Christian ministry, this opinion may excite no ordinary emotions of surprise, yet do I flatter myself that, ere the present discourses shall have been concluded, so powerful and convincing will be the weight of evidence in its favour, borne both by the scriptures and the writers of the primitive church, that these emotions will change their object, and be directed to such as have the confidence and temerity to deny its truth.

Before, however, I proceed in the investigation, it will be proper to place the subject in its true light. By maintaining the continued existence of the apostolick office, you are not, therefore, to imagine that we claim for those who now enjoy it, the supernatural power of working miracles, or of speaking various languages. Such power belongs not to them, nor, as I am free to declare, to any other mortals, whatever they may believe, or profess to believe.

We rather make, and, as I conceive, very justly, a material distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary gifts originally conferred upon the apostles. The first, or the ordinary, are to be found in the commission granted them by their divine Lord. As it appears in the gospels, according to John and Mark, there is nothing that at this time demands our attention, or that is opposed to the more full and explicit terms in which it is recorded in Matthew. 'Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' This, then, is the commission which instituted their office, which constituted them the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. And read it, brethren, as often as you please, it will be found to contain no allusion whatever to miraculous powers; to nothing which is not, at this very day, professedly enjoyed and exercised by the ministering servants of Christ. It does not even include the power of administering the Lord's supper by name. But only in general terms it directs the eleven to preach the gospel, to establish churches, to admit members therein by baptism, and to perpetuate its existence by a ministry, as duly authorized to teach others, as they themselves were authorized.

But, in relation to their extraordinary gifts, these were conferred upon them at a subsequent period, upon the memorable day of pentecost, and made no part of the office into which they were inducted. They could have

taught all that Christ had commanded; they could have baptized and ordained, if these had never been granted. Not, indeed, with the same power and success; for, at that early age, it was unquestionably of the utmost importance to possess the gift of tongues, in order to be able to address the nations in their respective languages; and the working of miracles, in order to convince them that they were teachers sent from God. But, when this was once accomplished, the powers themselves ceased with the necessity which had called them into existence. They are to be considered as so many admirable qualifications which the apostles enjoyed for evangelizing the world; but they were no more indissolubly attached to their office, than were the particular talents and statesmanlike qualities of either of our former presidents indissolubly attached to the station they filled.

To convince you that I am right in this argument, and that it is only a popular error which supposes the apostleship to have been abolished, owing to the removal of supernatural powers, you are to remember, that those powers were exerted by many other individuals besides the twelve. This was the case with the presbyters. In James, there is this passage: 'Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.' Stephen and Philip were only deacons, and yet the former, 'full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people;' while of the latter it is said that 'the people, with one accord, gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.' Are you, therefore, prepared to renounce the offices themselves, because the modern presbyter and deacon can lay no claim to the performance of such wonderful works? Let us see if the same principle would not carry you to a yet more revolting inference.

For private Christians also appear to have shared with the apostles in these miraculous gifts. In the last chapter of Mark it is said, 'These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.' In the nineteenth chapter of the Acts it is written, 'And it came to pass that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him; that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve.' Are you, therefore, prepared to say that there are no private Christians now, because there is not one single modern professor, who can pretend to have the supernatural gifts of healing and of tongues? I anticipate your thoughts. You cannot but shrink from such a conclusion, with the utmost repugnance. You cannot but perceive that the preceding examples clearly evince the imbecility of that argument, against the continued existence of the apostolick office, which is founded on the present inability of those who exercise its ordinary functions, to work miracles and speak with tongues.

I shall, therefore, in my next discourse, proceed to prove that it never has been abolished; that it still continues to exist; and that we may fully rely on the word of Christ, that it always will. In the mean time, let me assure you that, in the prosecution of this inquiry, I have no sinister designs to accomplish. If it were possible for me to entertain them, I can perceive no probability of their being

realized. With the mere creature of popularity and expediency, it were apparently far better, upon such a theme, to impose the seal of perpetual silence upon the lips. But, preferring to be guided by other and better motives, preferring the cause of truth, as the only cause that can give me comfort in a dying hour, and especially at the dreadful day of judgment, I have determined to venture all upon the resolute, though charitable, vindication of the true church of Christ. 'For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.'

If this course exposes me to cavil, I have learnt from Paul that, 'if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.' If it fastens upon me the suspicion of corrupt and unworthy motives, I have obtained from the same source this invaluable lesson, 'With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not my own self: for I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.'

Upon principle, I am indeed extremely tenacious of freedom of thought and freedom of expression; and, claiming it for myself, I am equally willing to have it enjoyed by others. Not, however, with the view of wantonly outraging the feelings of any Christian, nor for the purpose of derogating in the slightest degree from his attainments in grace, or his sincere devotion to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. For what could be gained by this conduct here? and, even upon the supposition that there is much, what is to be gained hereafter? Nothing, absolutely nothing, unless it be the privilege of mourning, through a long eternity, the fearful recompense justly awarded to bitter revilings and ungodly malice. I am, therefore, steadfastly resolved, after the example, and in obedience to the express mandate of Christ, to love all men, and particularly all Christians, of whatsoever name and whatsoever sect.

It will be done, not by fighting their battles and espousing their errors, not by attributing to them the possession of that true church, from which they have erred, not know-



ing the scriptures upon this point, however deeply they may be versed in their doctrines, and however freely they may have imbibed their spirit, in others. But I will show it, by cherishing towards them that kind of charity, which imputes good intentions, even where it is incapable of perceiving entire obedience to divine institutions. I will show it, by cordially inviting them, as I now do, as I always have done, and shall continue to do, to unite with us, at the table of the Lord, in partaking of 'the cup of blessing which we bless.' and 'the bread which we break.'

More than this it is not reasonable for them to expect or to demand. More than this I could not conscientiously advise an episcopalian of my own principles to tender. But to this extent, to the extent of loving them, even as Christ hath loved us, do you, brethren, as you value the future approbation of heaven, do you always exhibit the true Christian temper and spirit of benevolence and forbearance. And may God, of his infinite mercy, soon cause all our divisions to be healed; by his Spirit, working in due season, may all believers, rallying round one common standard of faith and practice, soon become united in the one holy catholick or universal church; and to Him, the Father, to the Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, shall be ascribed everlasting praises, world without end. AMEN.

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## SERMON IV.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

IN my last discourse, I succeeded, brethren, in proving from the scriptures the divine institution of the office of a

deacon. I showed you, both from the scriptures and by admission, the equally authorized office of a presbyter, or elder, from which so large and respectable a body of protestants derive their name, and commenced my observations upon the highest or apostolick office, by endeavouring to obviate the commonly received objection to its continued existence, which is founded upon the acknowledged absence of supernatural gifts, on the part of those who now claim to exercise its powers.

The argument, I cannot but think, was full and satisfactory. It separated the office and its prescribed duties from the miraculous properties with which the twelve apostles were endowed, in order to discharge their ministry to the greater glory of God, and the more certain propagation of the gospel. It clearly negatived the popular doctrine upon the subject, inasmuch as this would prove too much; it would prove, that if at this time there are no apostles, because there are none to perform miracles, and to speak with tongues, neither can there be presbyters, nor deacons, nor private Christians, because they are now similarly incapacitated, although instances of the same powers, having been once conferred upon them, are recorded in the scriptures.

I advance, therefore, in the discussion, and consider the language employed by our Saviour, at the separation of the eleven to the work of the ministry, as affording no slight evidence of the perpetuity of the apostolick office. In St. John, the words are these: 'Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.' And here, brethren, you are to bear in mind, that this passage must necessarily refer to those powers only, which can be borne by frail and sinful beings, like ourselves. It does not mean, for example, that because the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, to taste of death for every man, and, by that death upon the cross, to make a full and complete atonement for all sin; it does not mean, that because of this, Christ sent the eleven to work out the redemption already worked, and endure the cross and death already endured. For such performances, finite beings would appear to have been utterly inadequate; and

had it been otherwise, having been once accomplished, no possible necessity could exist for another sacrifice and expiation for human guilt.

We must, consequently, look for some other solution to this imposing delegation of power; something within the scope of man's inferior capacity and character. Hence I confine it to those acts of the ministry which the eleven exercised, as has been already shown you, in Christ's stead. It is as though he had said, As my Father hath sent me to preach the gospel, and baptize, to build up the church and establish its ministry, even so send I you, duly empowered in my name, to discharge all these duties; as he sent me to make you apostles, even so send I you, with full power and authority to confer the same dignity on others. If this be not a fair and correct paraphrase, I know not what is. I know not what else could have been possibly designed by our blessed Redeemer. Whatever catholics may assert, protestants will never admit, that the oblation upon the cross can be again offered. Whatever favourite doctrine they may have drawn from the subsequent words of Christ, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost; Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained;' protestants will never admit that persons, who afterwards acknowledged themselves to be 'men of like passions' with their hearers, had any other power to forgive sins, than that which was declaratory, and not absolute; that which consisted in preaching repentance, as the medium of obtaining forgiveness of God, through Christ, and not auricular confessions, in order to receive it, in virtue of even apostolick power. You must, therefore, perceive the strict propriety of the inference I have drawn. You must perceive, that, when in the very act of creating apostles, our Lord used the emphatic language, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you,' he certainly intended, that their apostleship should be transmitted to others, with the like authority on their part to transmit it ad infinitum.

And this, brethren, is a conclusion abundantly verified by the latter clause of their grand commission, as it is given in Matthew: 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end

of the world.' For we may say of all the original apostles, as one of them early said of the patriarch David, they are 'both dead and buried;' their spirits no more inhabit the bodies that are now mouldered into dust and oblivion. Our Saviour could not, therefore, have promised to be with them individually and personally, unto the end of the world; with the very men composed of spirit, soul, and body, whom he on this occasion addressed. It would have been falsified by the event. It would have derogated alike from his presence and his truth. For the world yet exists, and in the world, those apostles no longer live, and move, and have their being. But apply the promise, as it should be applied, to the office they sustained; consider this to have been prolonged from their age to our own; consider it to have been regularly filled, in uninterrupted succession, throughout this long tract of time; and that it will thus continue to be occupied, until time shall be no more: and I find it easy to comprehend as well as to believe. I find it peculiarly grateful and encouraging to reflect, that, in the continued existence of its highest, apostolick order, the presence of Christ is still enjoyed in the ministry of the church; that he still loves and fights for it, as his own glorious church; that he still watches over it, with all a bridegroom's fond affection, and, through all future time, will make his own saying faithful and true, that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

But these arguments, it may be said, are mere inferences. The declarations in question do not, in so many words, announce the perpetuity of the apostolick office. I reply, that if this objection be valid, it can be urged as strongly against every order of the priesthood, and thus leave the church without a single authorized minister of Christ. I also appeal to the scriptures, and, to the close of that period of ecclesiastical history which they embrace, can exhibit the names of other apostles than those originally appointed by our Saviour. Of Judas, one of the twelve, it is even 'written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein; and his bishoprick let another take.' Hence the very first act performed by the eleven, after the ascension

of Jesus, was to supply the vacancy occasioned by the treason and death of Judas. In relation to two candidates selected for this purpose, 'they prayed, and said, 'Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots: and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.' He shared their title and their power. He was no more inferior to them, than if he had been called and appointed by Christ in person. And was not Paul inducted into the same office? Was not he equal to his brethren, who repeatedly styles himself 'an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God;' who expressly says, 'I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles;' and again, 'are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am more?'

How evidently, then, do these two instances of Matthias and Paul negative the idea of the apostolick office being limited, as to number, or person, or time! They were not of the twelve first selected by Christ. For a long period after this blessed Being expired upon the cross, the latter was a persecutor of the Christians, and was only converted to the faith, he so nobly preached and adorned, by the miraculous power of God.

And should it be contended, that these were extraordinary cases, and not to be used as precedents in the future organization of the ministry, I have yet to present you with other names familiar to the readers of the sacred volume. In the fourteenth chapter of the Acts, divine worship was about to be offered to two of the evangelists, under the idea, expressed by the people, 'in the speech of Lycaonia, the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.' 'Which, when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things?' Barnabas, therefore, was an apostle. In this case, and some others, by that title his name is associated with, and even precedes, that of the great Paul. But how is



this to be reconciled with the favourite opinion of some, that the office itself was restricted, and incapable of being transmitted to others? How is that opinion to be reconciled with this passage, in the epistle of Paul to the Philippians, 'I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger,' that is, your apostle, for in the original Greek, the word is *'αποστολον'*, although it is here translated according to its literal import, 'one who is sent,' 'a messenger?'

Surely, brethren, these quotations, and many others of a similar character might be adduced: surely they are utterly at variance with the alleged confinement of the apostleship to the twelve, to Matthias and Paul, or with its final extinction in them. Names, in themselves, are indeed extremely vague and uncertain; but, in these cases, we find Epaphroditus denominated 'my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier,' as well as 'your apostle.' We not only find the plural of this title applied to Barnabas and Paul conjunctively, but we discover throughout their travels, as recorded in the Acts, that they always exercised co-ordinate power and jurisdiction to the very moment when 'the contention,' concerning the conduct of the evangelist Mark, 'was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.' We discover, that at this separation, Barnabas took Mark, and Paul chose Silas, and that neither arrogated to himself the right, or the power, of regulating the conduct, or controlling the opinions of the other.

And here it will be necessary to remind you of one of the most material points connected with this discussion. They, who claim that presbyters are now the only order of ministers in Christ's church, are reduced to the necessity of maintaining, that those presbyters enjoy the authority of calling others to the same office, by the imposition of hands. We, on the contrary, firmly contend, that this authority was peculiar to the apostles; that they alone exercised it in the scriptures, and finally transferred it, not to the presbyters, but to their immediate successors in the apostleship. To prove this, we have both the

negative testimony of the inspired volume, wherein not one single instance of presbyterian ordination can be found; and the positive, which shows that all ordinations were performed by the apostles in person, either by the twelve, by Paul, called to be an apostle in an extraordinary manner, or by those who were subsequently raised to this pre-eminent dignity. For example, the twelve 'laid their hands' upon the seven deacons, who were never known to perform the like ceremony. 'The apostles Paul and Barnabas 'ordained them elders in every church,' who were equally scrupulous with the deacons in never presuming to assume the same power.

But what places this subject beyond all reasonable doubt is to be found in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, particularly in those directed to Timothy, who is therein regarded by the writer, Paul, as exercising apostolick power and government in the church of Ephesus. I know, indeed, that the apostolick character of Timothy is denied by the opponents of episcopacy, and that they are extremely anxious to have it believed that he was only a presbyter, or, at most, an evangelist; although this last is a title that designates no one office in particular; inasmuch as it signifies 'a preacher,' 'the messenger of good news,' and is consequently equally applicable to the apostles, elders, and deacons, all of whom preached 'glad tidings of good things.' But to show you that Timothy was superiour to a presbyter, and therefore an apostle, with all the rights and privileges attached to that office, you are to remember that it is presupposed by these remarkable expressions, 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands;' and again, 'The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.' All which evidently relates to ordination, and not to instruction in doctrine or practice; because these things were to be committed, not to the ignorant and vicious pagan of Ephesus, in the hope of producing his conversion; but to such as were already Christians; 'to faithful men,' who in virtue of this com-

mission were to do that, which they had not power to do before, to preach the gospel and 'teach others also.'

With this explanation agrees that other admonition of Paul, 'Lay hands suddenly on no man.' Wherein you perceive, that the full power of ordination is granted to Timothy, and the greatest caution enjoined, lest there should be others than the truly faithful to obtain the ministry of holy things. But when or where were such charges ever conveyed to the mere elders of the scriptures? Some of that order were at this identical period resident at Ephesus, and Paul, on his journey to Jerusalem, long before the epistle was written, had sent from Miletus to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church; and when they came, instead of charging them, as he charged Timothy, on the subject of ordination, he never referred to it; he addressed them altogether upon the subordinate duties of the ministry. And how are we to account for this, if elders were in reality entitled to ordain? How can we possibly account for this strange omission, on the part of Paul, in a particular upon which he was afterwards so very solicitous, and so very minute? Especially, when he had sent for those elders from Miletus, for the express purpose of giving them his last advice; and had pressed it home upon their hearts with such power and affection, that 'they all wept sore, and fell upon Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.' You cannot believe that he had previously counselled them on the subject, when they were admitted to the eldership. It would involve the absurdity, if Timothy was only an elder like themselves, of sending him to Ephesus to ordain, where elders already existed, having equal authority, and equally explicit directions from Paul, as to the manner in which they were to discharge this important act of their ministry. I am therefore persuaded that they never had such counsel. I am persuaded on this ground, and for the additional reason, that elders never had such power conferred upon them. It is never attributed to them in the scriptures, in the Acts, or in the epistles; and it was never exercised. In the much controverted passage,

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery,' the preposition 'with,' at most, merely implies concurrence, and not the creative power asserted in the parallel passage, already quoted, 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.' Timothy, on the other hand, evidently possessed the right to ordain. It is ascribed to him in the solemn charge, 'Lay hands suddenly on no man.' It was this that constituted his apostolick character, and that gave him pre-eminence over the inferiour order of elders.

On no other principle can we satisfactorily account for another class of duties, as solemnly urged upon his attention. 'Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.' 'Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.' For how can these charges comport with the opinion, that he was only an elder himself? How can this obvious superiority and right to govern, to put upon trial, and rebuke the elders of Ephesus; how can it consist with his holding the same office, and of course possessing no higher authority in the church of Christ? Nothing could be more absurd; nothing more clearly evince, in those who maintain such ground, a palpable sacrifice of reason and argument on the altar of prejudice and schism.

I am gratified, however, in being able to present you with yet more conclusive evidence of the apostolick character of this eminent servant of God. Most persons, in perusing the epistles, appear to overlook the fact, that some of those, bearing the name of Paul, are not exclusively his own; that others unite with him in these admirable expositions of sound doctrine, and were equally inspired and authorized to address the churches. The first epistle to the Thessalonians is of this description. It was not written by Paul alone. It commences in this manner: 'Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians.' Nor is this to be regarded as a mere

matter of form, unless we are disposed to impute formality to those words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. It rather clearly demonstrates, that this epistle was the joint production of the three individuals, recorded as its authors. In the former part of it, plural pronouns are constantly used. 'We give thanks to God always for you all.' 'Ye became followers of us.' 'They themselves show of us, what manner of entering in we had unto you.' 'As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.' 'Neither at any time used we flattering words.' And now comes the passage to which your attention is particularly directed: 'Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the **APOSTLES** of Christ.'

Plainly and directly, then, is Timothy pronounced to be an apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. By our opponents the name is denied him. They feel that it would be the death blow to their whole system. But Paul and Silvanus had no human device to sustain, and therefore they apply it to him. Timothy knew the office with which he was invested, and therefore he appropriated its proper appellation to himself, and thus classed himself with the apostles. The word is plural and not singular, as it would have been, if Paul only had written the epistle. It is even remarkable that, in the same chapter, he distinguished himself from his brethren, as having been more particularly desirous of visiting the Thessalonians. 'Wherefore we would have come unto you (even I, Paul) once and again; but Satan hindered us.' So evidently does he discriminate between the two pronouns, we and I; and so undeniably do I show you, from the highest of all authority, the apostolick character of Timothy. It ought to silence every objection. It is the precise testimony we have been long challenged to produce, as that which would decide the whole controversy in our favour; and I am only astonished that it should hitherto, so far as my knowledge extends, have escaped the observation of the eminent theologians who have maintained the divine right of episcopacy.



For the present, I defer the scarcely less striking example of Titus, to whom Paul writes, 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.' I defer also the case of the seven angels, presiding over the seven churches of Asia Minor, who are addressed by St. John in the book of Revelation, and for whose apostolick character there is abundant testimony. I defer them because they will be better understood, when taken in connexion with the testimony of the primitive fathers of the church, to which I have so frequently referred, and with which I propose to make you acquainted in my next discourse. It will fully corroborate the construction I have given to the scriptures, and establish it on their imperishable basis.

On the review of what has been already submitted, it appears to me, that nothing is hazarded, no liability to the imputation of reasoning from false statements, or of drawing false conclusions, when the whole current of scriptural evidence is asserted to bear strongly and incontrovertibly in favour of these three orders of Christ's ministers, deacons, presbyters, or elders, and apostles. In relation to the last and highest, I have shown you, what no one disputes, inasmuch as the apostles appointed by Christ were the latest writers of the new testament, that this office continued in existence throughout the period included in the divine records. I have also shown you, that Barnabas and Epaphroditus were each honoured with the title of apostle; that it is expressly appropriated to Timothy; that he exercised the highest and peculiar duties of the office itself, and must, upon every fair and equitable construction, be enrolled on the catalogue of its incumbents.

No sensible man requires to be informed, that where inspired history terminates we must necessarily resort to that which is uninspired, in order to prosecute the inquiry upon the subject of church government. The principles upon which that inquiry should be conducted are very important and even essential. To be understood, they should be explained with the utmost clearness and precision; but as my remaining limits would scarcely afford the opportunity to exhibit them in their true aspect, they

must likewise be reserved to the succeeding sabbath. In the mean time, as the object is to prove the continuance of the apostolick office, after the death of its original holders, and that to this office alone belongs the power of ordination, it will not be amiss to vindicate the course I am pursuing with a few closing remarks.

And here, brethren, permit me to observe, that I rest every thing upon the basis of the scriptures, and repair to antiquity, for the sole purpose of proving that I give them a fair and legitimate interpretation. If Christ had not said, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you:' if he had not promised to the apostles in particular, 'Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world:' if there had been no other apostles, but the original twelve, with Matthias and Paul, I should not be so strenuous in maintaining that their office exists at the very moment I am speaking. Or, if there could be found one solitary example of presbyterian ordination in the sacred volume, I should be well pleased to ascribe to it the same force and authority which now attaches to that which is episcopal. Under such circumstances, I would not hesitate to discard the unvarying testimony of antiquity, as either mistaken in its facts or spurious in its origin. But when, upon every candid and impartial investigation of the word of inspiration, I am forced to consider the reverse of all this as eminently true, nothing can satisfy my conscience; nothing my internal sense of the divine right to institute and prescribe all things necessary for the welfare and prosperity of Zion; nothing but a sacred regard for, and an obedient following of, holy oracles. As in them, the church appears to me to be constituted one and indivisible, with a ministry that is not to be changed in part or abolished entirely, I can never consent to coincide with human views, or to repose my confidence in churches of human construction.

If this be bigotry, inasmuch as it is the bigotry of the scriptures, disclosed by our Saviour and his evangelists, it is mine, and I am perfectly willing to bear its reproach. 'Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's

sake.' It is only refusing to others the same right of private judgment which they vehemently claim for themselves; and since we must all give an account of the things done in the body, where there will preside a judge, unbiassed by the denunciations of separatists, it is some consolation to be accused of bigotry, with the grateful consciousness pervading the soul, that it is for adhering closely to the pattern of heavenly things. But if we 'sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for us?' If we knowingly reject his institutions, and in preference suffer ourselves to float upon the tide of popular prejudice, 'who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?'

I allude not to the mere error of ignorance, where there is sincerity of heart to obey the will of God, whenever it is clearly perceived and understood. But for myself, having attentively studied and found out what I firmly believe to be the divinely instituted church of Christ, I will not yield it up, though all men should forsake it, as all the disciples once forsook their Lord in his extremity and fled. I will not yield it up, because it would be highly criminal in me, however venial and pardonable in others, regarding it with different eyes, and imbibing different impressions. For wherever there is wilful schism, there, there is sin. Wherever there is a known illegal assumption of the ministerial functions, or a known usurpation of the higher offices, by such as only enjoy the subordinate, there also, there is sin. And that these sins are not of the most venial complexion in the sight of God is readily admitted, by the deeply skilled in sacred history.

Take, for example, the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They were the sons of Levi, a component part of the Jewish hierarchy, who, not contented with their inferior station, aspired to the high priesthood itself. 'And they,' with two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, 'gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?'

But Moses replied, 'Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?' And what were the consequences attending this rebellion, this criminal ambition for sacerdotal pre-eminence? By the judgment of the Lord, 'the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained unto them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.' The case of Uzzah is still more remarkable, for it even embraces the inanimate things of the priesthood, and perhaps corresponds with every present unlawful consecration of the elements used in the Christian sacraments. Inconsiderately and without any evil design, he 'put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it: for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.'

I am not therefore to be deluded with the modern cry, that bishops 'take too much upon them,' when claiming to be successors of the apostles in their office and ministry. It is the appointment of God that they should do this, and who is there to darken his counsels or to contend with him? Not the preacher of to-day, who, upon diligent examination of his word, perceives the angel of the church at Ephesus to be commended in these words. 'Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars;' who discovers in the short epistle of Jude, that the crime, just recited from the old dispensation, may be, and was, actually committed under the new. 'These,' he declares, 'speak evil of things which they know not.' 'Wo unto them! for they have' 'perished in the gainsaying of Core;' Who finds St. Paul proclaiming to the holy brethren among the He-

brews concerning the priesthood, 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also,' he continues, 'Christ glorified not himself to be made a High Priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.' For, 'though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered.'

It is not, then, a light thing, as some persons are fain to imagine, to take upon themselves the office of an ambassador for Christ, uncertain or careless whether they have or have not obtained it through the right channel, and from the requisite authority. It is rather a most solemn and serious transaction; one that cannot be too intensely studied, or too ardently desired to be received according to the appointment of heaven. A slight research will almost invariably result in the opinion, that one denomination is as lawful as another, and one set of ministers as duly authorized as another. But this is not the language of the bible; and when ye consider the multitude of evils springing from our numerous divisions, our endless heresies and schisms, can ye wonder that it is not? Can ye wonder, when that bible is thus strangely perverted, and every whim of man is but the precursor of new efforts to rend the body of Christ, that the evil days are not shortened, and that the dawn of millennial union and glory still refuses to appear?

Such wonder exists not with me. I look for no good thing that can come out of schism. I look for no millennium, until sectarians, after the future manner of the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and kid, shall dwell and lie down together in the courts of the same house of our God; until, like the predicted nations, they shall beat their partisan swords and spears into real spiritual ploughshares and pruning hooks, and learn the art of polemick war no more. And therefore do I justify myself for embarking in these discourses, sustained as I am by the hope of gaining some converts upon principle to the church and ministry of the Lord's anointed. And having embarked, 'For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as



a lamp that burneth.' Wherever there is a true Christian, let him erect what banner he pleases, I will bid him, with regard to his internal religion, his experimental faith and practice, 'God speed.' But nevertheless know ye, brethren, assuredly, that union should be the watchword of all believers in Jesus; and at the same time, that, so far as the general religious prosperity is concerned, all professed union is no better than schism, until there be but one visible church, as there is but one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

Hasten, then, we beseech thee, gracious God, a union so fervently to be implored. Hasten the arrival of that day, when light shall come upon Jerusalem, and thy glory rise upon her; when the Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising; when her sons shall come from far, and her daughters be nursed at her side; when the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto her, and a multitude of precious offerings shall come up with acceptance on thine altar, and thou shalt glorify the house of thy glory. These things would we pray for, with one accord. These things, out of thine infinite mercy, do thou grant: and to thee, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, shall be ascribed all glory, and honour, and dominion, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

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## SERMON V.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

IN introducing the testimony of the fathers of the church, in relation to the government and ministry established

therein, by the holy apostles, I have already represented, that the principles upon which the inquiry should be conducted are very important, and even essential, and that to be understood, they should be explained with the utmost clearness and precision.

You are doubtless aware, that all the various denominations of protestant Christians are exceedingly tenacious in holding up the bible as the sole rule of their faith and practice; and not one of them has been more plain and explicit, on this very material point, than the church to which we profess to belong. According to her sixth article, 'Holy scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.' With this doctrine I most cordially concur. I have not the remotest idea of recognising any religious system whatever, as a standard of authority, independent of that blessed volume, which alone contains the written revelation of God's will. To this alone I bow with reverential awe, and in the spirit of a rational and confiding faith.

And yet, who does not know that from this one inspired source are drawn a vast variety of opposing creeds? It is the common standard of catholic and protestant, of churchman and dissenter, of trinitarian and anti-trinitarian, of Calvinist and Arminian. All these, with many more, entertaining opinions diametrically at variance, the one with the other; all these appeal to the same divine revelation, and thence deduce their respective rites and dogmas.

Under such circumstances, to pretend that the several sects are alike just and right, in their different views and inferences, would be to deprive the scriptures of all harmony and all certainty. The same passage would be made in one mouth to assert the everlasting, and in another the limited, punishment of the wicked. And certainly, by no process of reasoning, with which I am acquainted, can it be made to appear, that these discordant assertions are both true, and that a most palpable

contradiction in terms is, in fact, no contradiction. The same may be said of all other debatable opinions. If both sides are to be considered equally entitled to credit, there is an end to the unchangeable character and consistency of God and his word. We are at perfect liberty to believe what we list, and to construct a thousand forms of doctrine, no matter how great may be the contrast, how irreconcilable the sentiments. But conscious as I am, that nothing of this kind can be justly imputed to the scriptures, it is with me a solemn and serious truth, that they speak but one language, and impose upon us the obligation of endeavouring to interpret them in singleness of heart and unity of mind.

Still, however, we differ; we cannot agree. Where, then, are we to look for a competent tribunal, to which we may refer our differences, and consent to abide by its decision? In this life, I know of none, unless it be the uninspired writings of those who first believed in Christ. Some of them were cotemporary and personally acquainted with the apostles, and consequently in possession of much greater advantages than we can possibly enjoy, for ascertaining, if not the precise doctrines, at least the precise institutions, of those immediate companions and servants of Christ.

Suppose, for example, that one of our age had constantly associated with the apostles, and, by the good providence of God, had been permitted to remain to this time; suppose that, as a Christian of blameless life and conversation, he was every way worthy of our confidence in his veracity; Would he not be able most satisfactorily to settle such questions as these? Did the apostles admit infants to baptism? Did they, in celebrating the rite, sprinkle or immerse? Did they recognise a change of the sabbath from the last, to the first, day of the week? Or, to come more immediately within the design of these discourses, Did they establish the one single order of presbyters in the ministry, or the three distinct orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons? Most clearly there can be but one opinion upon such a statement. We should all be willing to admit the superiour accuracy of his

knowledge to our own, and as readily agree to be governed by the decisive testimony he would be enabled to bear.

This, then, as I conceive, is the very attitude occupied by the primitive fathers, with the single exception that, being dead, they yet speak by the works which they have left behind. They either lived with the apostles, or, in some instances, soon after; they enjoyed all the facilities for information connected with that early age and their peculiar situation; they were humble, pious, and holy men of God; they evinced their faithfulness unto death, in cheerfully submitting to the pains and penalties of martyrdom; they committed their knowledge of the Christian church to paper; their writings have been preserved pure and unadulterated to our age, and are at this moment as credible and authentick as they were at the moment they were first composed.

And now I demand, in what light are they to be regarded? Not as divine authority, not as equally binding and imperative with the letter of the scriptures; but as the declarations of so many impartial and disinterested witnesses of facts which came under their own observation, and about which they could be no more mistaken than you can be of the nature of the government under which you live, that it is republican, and not monarchical; that its institutions are free, proceeding from the will of the people, and not arbitrary, from the nod of a despot. In determining the true sense of those passages of the scriptures which relate to the ministry of Christ's church, and concerning which there is so much controversy existing at the present day, growing out of sectarian feeling and prejudice; Where, then, can you discover another tribunal, in all respects perfectly fair and impartial, as the tribunal furnished by the fathers? It may not, cannot be. I would far sooner disbelieve that Alexander crossed the Hellespont, and Cæsar the Rubicon, than deny all credibility to those numerous attestations, with which they prove episcopacy to have been universally established in the church by the apostles of Christ.

I will here present you with a few of the most decided and unequivocal character. To begin with Ignatius, the

successor of Peter in the apostolick office at Antioch, appointed by him, and whose personal knowledge of many of the apostles is not denied. In his epistle to the Magnesians he writes, 'Seeing, then, I have been judged worthy to see you, by Damas, your most excellent BISHOP; and by your very worthy PRESBYTERS, Bassus and Apollonius; and by my fellow servant, Sotio, the DEACON, in whom I rejoyce, forasmuch as he is SUBJECT unto his bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ; I determined to write unto you. Wherefore it will become you, also, not to use your bishop too familiarly upon the account of his youth; but to yield all reverence to him, according to the power of God the Father; as also I perceive that your holy presbyters do; not considering his age, which, indeed, to appearance, is young; but as becomes those who are prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the bishop of us all. It will, therefore, behoove you to obey your bishop, in honour of him whose pleasure it is that ye should do so; because he that does not do so, deceives not the bishop, whom he sees, but affronts him that is invisible. For whatsoever of this kind is done, it reflects not upon man, but upon God, who knows the secrets of our hearts. It is therefore fitting that we should not only be called Christians, but be so; as some call, indeed, their governor bishop, but yet do all things without him. But I can never think that such as these have a good conscience, seeing they are not gathered together thoroughly according to God's commandment.'

Here, then, brethren, we have a distinct enumeration of the three separate orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons; we have the subjection of the two last, and of all the Magnesian Christians to the first, explicitly stated, and the dangerous consequences of insubordination maintained. Afterwards, if possible, he yet more distinctly tells them, 'I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a divine concord; your bishop presiding in the place of God; your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles; and your deacons, most dear to me, being intrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ.'



In his epistle to the Trallians, he enjoins upon them to 'continue inseparable from Jesus Christ our God, and from your bishop, and from the commands of the apostles. He that is within the altar is pure; but he that is without,' 'that does any thing without the bishop, and presbyters, and deacons, is not pure in his conscience.' And again, after enumerating the same three orders, he uses this strong and emphatic language: 'Without these there is no church.'

In his epistle to the Philadelphians, he interprets the scriptures in a manner scarcely compatible with the modern notions to which I have frequently adverted: 'I cried whilst I was among you; I spake with a loud voice: Attend to the bishop, and to the presbytery, and to the deacons. Now, some supposed that I spake this as foreseeing the division that should come among you. But he is my witness, for whose sake I am in bonds, that I knew nothing from any man. But the Spirit spake, saying on this wise: Do nothing without the bishop; keep your bodies as the temples of God; love unity; flee divisions; be the followers of Christ, as he was of his Father. I therefore did as became me, as a man composed to unity. For where there is division and wrath, God dwelleth not. But the Lord forgives all that repent, if they return to the unity of God, and to the counsel of the bishop.'

No language, brethren, can be stronger than this, to prove that its author, the companion of the apostles, held in abhorrence what now constitute the divisions and schisms of Christians; that he regarded them as directly opposed to the witness of the Spirit of our God, and pregnant with incalculable evils to the church; and that, in his judgment, all Christians must be subject to their bishop, as the highest earthly fountain of ecclesiastical authority, ordained of God. 'Do nothing without the bishop;' 'love unity; flee divisions:' 'where there is division and wrath, God dwelleth not.' On the other hand, in his epistle to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, he takes occasion to address the laity of that church in these truly encouraging terms: 'Hearken unto the bishop, that God also may hearken unto you. My soul be security for

them that submit to their bishop, with their presbyters and deacons. And may my portion be with theirs in God.'

Nor must I forget to apprize you, that these quotations are only specimens of a large number to the same import, pervading the epistles of this holy man, who professed to write, not of himself, not as taught by mere uninspired men, but upon the foundation of Christ and his apostles. And what became of him? Did he continue faithful unto death? They who saw him die commence their narrative in these words: 'When Trajan, not long since, came to the Roman empire, Ignatius, the disciple of St. John the apostle (and evangelist,) a man in all things like unto the apostles, governed the church of Antioch with all care.' They describe his arraignment before Trajan, the intrepidity with which he confessed Christ crucified, and record this sentence pronounced upon him by that emperor: 'Forasmuch as Ignatius has confessed that he carries about within himself him that was crucified, we command that he be carried bound by soldiers to the great Rome, there to be thrown to the beasts, for the entertainment of the people. When the holy martyr heard this sentence, he cried out with joy, I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast vouchsafed to honour me with a perfect love towards thee; and hast made me to be put into iron bonds with thy apostle Paul.' After which, they detail the incidents occurring in his journey to Rome, and proceed to relate, that, upon the day of his martyrdom, 'all the brethren kneeling down, he prayed to the Son of God in behalf of the churches, that he would put a stop to the persecution, and continue the love of the brethren towards each other; which being done, he was with all haste led into the amphitheatre, and speedily, according to the command of Cæsar before given, thrown in, the end of the spectacles being at hand.' 'Thus,' they continue, 'was he delivered to the cruel beasts, near the temple, by wicked men;' and thus, by his patient submission to such a cruel death, do I claim for the testimony of the holy martyr Ignatius all credit, in relation to the three orders in the ministry, first established by divine authority.

Polycarp was another of the fathers personally known to the apostles. He was, indeed, the fellow disciple of St. John with Ignatius; and Irenæus, who was his scholar, assures us that he was taught by the apostles, and familiarly conversed with many who had seen our Lord in the flesh. After being consecrated by his preceptor, bishop of Smyrna, he also wrote several epistles to the churches; but of these, one only remains, addressed to the Philippians, in which there is, however, express mention of the two orders of presbyters and deacons, and this abundant evidence in favour of episcopacy. Its direction, recognising what Ignatius incidentally notices in his epistle to the Magnesians, and all acknowledge to be true, that he was bishop of Smyrna: 'Polycarp and the presbyters that are with him, to the church of God which is at Philippi.' Its approbation of the epistles of Ignatius, from which I have so largely quoted. Towards the conclusion, he thus remarks: 'The epistles of Ignatius which he wrote unto us, together with what others of his have come to our hands, we have sent to you according to your order; which are subjoined to this epistle; by which you may be greatly profited; for they treat of faith and patience, and of all things that pertain to edification in the Lord Jesus.' So that this passage as evidently shows his perfect concurrence in all the statements, opinions, and declarations of Ignatius, who had previously visited him in his journey to Rome, as if they had been written with his own hand. And let me add, brethren, that none of the fathers stand higher in the estimation of posterity than this worthy confessor. He was called by his contemporaries, 'the blessed,' 'the most admirable Polycarp.' He was, beyond doubt, that angel of the church of Smyrna to whom the First and the Last directed St. John to write, 'I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich.)' 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'

He was faithful! In the reign of Marcus Antoninus, he was brought before the Roman proconsul of Asia, and required to 'swear by the genius of Cæsar,' and to 'reproach Christ.' 'Eighty and six years,' he replied, 'have

I now served Christ, and he has never done me the least wrong; how, then, can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?' The proconsul continued, and said unto him, 'I have wild beasts ready; to those I will cast thee, except thou repent.' He answered, 'Call for them then: for we Christians are fixed in our minds not to change from good to evil: but for me it will be good to be changed from evil to good.' The proconsul added, 'Seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, I will cause thee to be devoured by fire, unless thou shalt repent.' Polycarp answered, 'Thou threatenest me with fire which burns for an hour, and so is extinguished: but knowest not the fire of the future judgment, and of that eternal punishment which is reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt.' And then was he condemned to the flames: his body was consumed, but his spirit returned to God, who gave it.

Yes, brethren, such was the man who bore evidence to the truth of episcopacy; who corroborated whatever Ignatius had written upon the subject, by annexing the epistles of his friend to the one he himself addressed to the Philippians: and such is my confidence in their veracity, their holy boldness in the faith, that I would search for no brighter testimony to prove the accuracy of our views of the ministry, established in the scriptures, than the confirmation afforded by the personal knowledge of these now sainted martyrs of the primitive church. More, indeed, is at our disposal: but my limits will compel me to be very brief in the extracts which follow. We have the testimony of Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, in Gaul, and the scholar of Polycarp, who says in his third book, 'We can reckon up those who were instituted bishops in the churches, by the apostles and their successors, even unto us: to whom also they committed the churches themselves: for they desired those to be exceeding perfect and irreproachable, whom they left successors, delivering up to them their own place of mastership.' 'The blessed apostles, therefore, founding and instructing the church, (of Rome,) delivered to Linus the episcopal office of ruling the church.' And in his fourth, 'True knowledge is the

doctrine of the apostles, according to the succession of the bishops, to whom they delivered the church, in every place: which doctrine hath reached us, preserved in its most full delivery.' Wherem you cannot but observe how fully Irenæus, who was also a martyr, confirms the doctrine which I have before manifestly proved from the scriptures: that the apostolick office was continued, and that it survived in the persons of the bishops, who, in his expressive language, obtained the mastership or rule of the churches.

We have the testimony of Clemens Alexandrinus, a writer of the second century, who was himself only a presbyter of Alexandria, and therefore not to be charged with the inclination to elevate bishops over his own order. After commenting upon the duties imposed upon Christians generally, in the sacred volume, he proceeds to remark: 'There are other precepts, without number, which concern men in particular capacities: some of which relate to presbyters, others which belong to bishops, and others respecting deacons.'

We have the testimony of the celebrated Tertullian, also a presbyter, and flourishing at the end of the second, and commencement of the third, century. His words are, 'The chief, or highest priest, who is the bishop, has the right of giving (baptism,) and after him, the presbyters and deacons: but not without the bishop's authority, on account of the honour of the church, which being preserved, peace is secured.' Words that as satisfactorily show the superiour office and power of a bishop, as any that could be selected from our vernacular tongue.

We have the testimony of Origen, a presbyter of the third century, who, in explaining this part of our Lord's prayer, 'Forgive us our debts,' observes, 'Besides these general debts, there is a debt due to widows who are maintained by the church; another to deacons; another to presbyters; and another to bishops: which is the greatest of all, and exacted by the Saviour of the whole church, who will severely punish the non-payment of it.'

We have the testimony of Cyprian, at this time bishop of Carthage, who thus speaks of the lowest order in the



ministry, and of its subjection to his own: 'The deacons ought to remember that the Lord chose apostles, that is, bishops and presidents; but, after the Lord's ascension to heaven, the apostles appointed deacons for themselves, the ministers of their episcopacy and of the church. So that we need not be afraid to do any thing against God, who makes bishops, if deacons need not be afraid to do (any thing) against us, by whom they are made.' He also reproves his presbyters for having, during his absence, readmitted to church membership some that had been before excluded by him, saying, 'What danger of offending the Lord ought we not to fear, when some of the presbyters, neither mindful of the gospel nor of their own place, neither regarding the future judgment of the Lord nor the bishop now set over them, challenge entirely to themselves, with haughty speech and contempt of their superiour, what was never done at all under our predecessors?'

We have the testimony of Jerome, a presbyter of the fourth century, who contends for the analogy existing between the Jewish and Christian churches, in these words: 'What Aaron, and his sons, and the levites were in the temple, the same, bishops, presbyters, and deacons, may claim to themselves in the church.' He also asserts, that 'the safety of the church depends upon the dignity of the high priest, to whom unless some extraordinary and eminent power be given above all, so many schisms will be produced in the church as there are priests. Thence it comes to pass, that without the command of the bishop, neither presbyter nor deacon possess the right of baptizing.' And if, in his celebrated letter to Evagrius, he asks the question, 'What does a bishop do, which a presbyter may not do, except ordination?' Not only does he here reserve to the bishop the sole authority of laying on hands in confirmation, and admission to the ministry, but, in another epistle, he expressly declares, 'With us, the bishops hold the place of the apostles.'

Yes, brethren, we have the testimony of these distinguished divines and primitive fathers, and they constitute a cloud of unexceptionable witnesses, all acknowledging the divine origin of our three orders in the ministry; all

giving the first rank and dignity to bishops; the second, to presbyters; and the third, to deacons: all maintaining that bishops alone were the successors of the apostles, in their pre-eminent office and ministry. Let, therefore, the caviller be silent, let the enthusiastick seceder pause, as they review a body of evidence so adverse to their pretensions, and that might easily be enlarged to the bulk of volumes. We have the voice of antiquity on our side. They can only oppose it with the dictum of the three last centuries, pronounced by a very small minority of the Christian world.

From what I have previously urged in relation to Timothy and Titus, particularly the first, you may, however, desire some additional evidence from the same source, that they were considered apostles, or bishops, superiour to presbyters, and alone possessing the power of ordination, at Ephesus and Crete. Among many others, Polycrates, a bishop of Ephesus, near the close of the second century, says, that ‘Timothy was ordained bishop of Ephesus, by the great Paul.’ Jerome employs nearly the same words: ‘Timothy was ordained bishop of the Ephesians, by the blessed Paul.’ Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in the fourth century, still more explicitly recognises his supremacy over mere presbyters: ‘The apostle, speaking to Timothy, being then a bishop, advises him thus: Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father.’ While Chrysostom, of the same age, whose praise is in all the churches, is even more precise and decided in one of his homilies, saying, ‘Paul directs Timothy to fulfil his ministry, being then a bishop; for that he was a bishop, appears from Paul’s writing thus to him: Lay hands suddenly on no man.’ And then as to Titus, if any person is disposed to question his episcopal character and superiority over elders, let him peruse these few, out of numerous authorities. In his account of ecclesiastical writers, Jerome enumerates, among others, ‘Titus, the bishop of Crete;’ and, in his comment upon this declaration of Paul, ‘For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee;’ nothing can be more to

the purpose than the construction he gives to it: 'Let bishops, who have the power of ordaining presbyters, attend to this.' Theodoret, bishop of Cyprus, at the beginning of the fifth century, and esteemed one of the most learned fathers of the church, also informs us, that 'Titus, a famous disciple of St. Paul, was by him ordained bishop of Crete, being a place of great extent, with a commission also to ordain bishops under him.' 'Take these authorities, then, with the universal opinion and practice of the church, wherein, for the first fifteen centuries, there is no record of a single ordination performed by presbyters, which was considered valid; and but very few that were even attempted, the act being almost unanimously denounced as a usurpation of power: and the persons promoted being immediately degraded: as it happened to Ischiras, ordained by the presbyter Colluthus, in the fourth century; take these authorities, with this opinion and practice, and there can be no room for doubt, but that bishops, in virtue of their apostolick rank, alone possessed the power of ordination, and that their sole right was never seriously questioned, until the age of Calvin, who, in the sixteenth century, established a new church, in which, for the first time, presbyters successfully usurped the authority of their superiours. Under what pretence, and with what advantage to the unity and prosperity of the church, I shall hereafter have occasion to examine.

One circumstance, however, I have as yet forborne to explain, to which I must particularly request your attention. It is a favourite argument with the opponents of episcopacy, and I believe the more a favourite from its being extremely plausible, and calculated to satisfy a superficial inquirer, that bishops have no more authority in the church than presbyters or elders, because these titles are indiscriminately applied to the same office, in the inspired volume. The fact we admit. We agree that, throughout the Acts and epistles, bishops and presbyters are frequently spoken of, as holding the same rank in the ministry. And what is our answer to this objection, always regarded by us as alike insidious and unfair?

In the first place, that we attach no importance whatever to mere names; that it is the office, and the duties appertaining to that office, about which we are alone solicitous. At the very time, then, when, according to the scriptures, bishop and presbyter were convertible terms, and designated the same individual minister, there existed the lower order of deacons, and the higher order of apostles; and it is for this threefold ministry that we contend, and not for the names by which it was at any time distinguished. If it could be shown that apostles were not superiour to the then second order of bishops or presbyters, there would indeed be some foundation for the argument; but, their superiority being universally acknowledged, it falls to the ground, being only calculated to gratify the subtle disputant on the one hand, and to secure the credulous proselyte on the other.

For, in the second place, while we accede to this interchangeable use of the words bishop and presbyter, in the scriptures, we fearlessly and confidently assert, that it ended with the apostolick age, and was not afterwards employed by the primitive Christians. Not only does Eusebius, the historian, say, 'Those very persons were called apostles, whom by usage of speech the church now calls bishops;' but the celebrated Theodoret, before mentioned, has furnished us with the following just solution of this merely apparent difficulty: 'The same persons were anciently called presbyters and bishops, and those now called bishops, were called apostles; but, in process of time, the name of apostle was left to those who were truly apostles, and the name of bishop was restrained to those who were anciently called apostles: Thus Epaphroditus was the apostle of the Philippians, Titus of the Cretans, and Timothy of the Asiaticks.'

A more triumphant vindication of episcopacy cannot be imagined. They who succeeded to the apostolick office, out of reverence to such of their predecessors as were immediately called by Christ, appear to have relinquished to them the more dignified title of apostle, and to have appropriated to themselves the humbler name of bishop, originally bestowed upon the second order of the ministry,

in common with that of presbyter; but thenceforward exclusively attached to the first, and never afterwards resumed by the second. The change was only in name; the two offices or orders remained as separate and distinct as they were before. Bishops were what the apostles had been, and presbyters, ceasing to call themselves bishops, looked up to these, as their superiours, as they had formerly looked up to the apostles, separated to that office by their Lord and Master in person. It was precisely as if, by the common consent of the American people, springing from gratitude for the services, and veneration for the memory of Washington, it should be determined, for the future, to appropriate to him alone the title of president; and to all his successors in the presidential office, created by the constitution, what is now regarded as the less dignified name of governor. It would not abstract one iota from the constitutional privileges and powers attached to the office itself. Its incumbent would still superintend and govern, as he now superintends and governs; and he would be considered the merest trifler, who should have the folly to assert, that a change of names had produced a material change in official rank and authority. The title, emperor, was conferred upon the victorious generals of Rome, during the period of the commonwealth. Was the emperor, Augustus, the first of the imperial dynasty, no more than a general? Reply is needless. You know the distinction; you perceive its application; and thus I dismiss a most evasive subterfuge, as utterly unworthy of Christian candour and Christian truth.

As intimately connected with it, I must not, however, forget to demolish another equally uncandid, though no less plausible perversion of the scriptures. The epistle to the Philippians commences in this manner: 'Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.' With great complacency, the adversaries to episcopacy immediately inquire, Where do you here find the three orders in the ministry? Strange, I reply, that sensible men should be so ready to compromise their reputation for common sagacity, when the verse itself obviously contains



all the orders we contend for. It proceeds from the two apostles, Paul and Timothy, and is addressed to bishops and deacons, in other words, to presbyters and deacons ; for we cheerfully agree that such is the interpretation of the passage. But what shall we say to the candour of these inquirers, when it is further considered that the epistle could not have been directed to the highest order in the ministry, for the very substantial reason, that Epaphroditus, the apostle of the Philippians, was its bearer? Already have I shown you that this was the title it confers upon him ; and to convince you that he was more than a mere messenger, this is the manner, in which he is commended to his episcopal flock : ‘Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation.’ All antiquity, indeed, regard him as an apostle. Jerome himself says, in his commentary upon the Galatians, ‘By little and little, in process of time, others were ordained apostles, by those whom our Lord had chosen, as that passage to the Philippians affirms, saying, I supposed it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, your apostle.’ Explaining this very text, Theodoret also contends that Paul ‘called Epaphroditus an apostle, because to him the charge of Philippi was committed ; wherefore it is manifest that those, which in the beginning of the epistle were called bishops, were under him.’ Jerome even adopts the latter explication. His comment is, ‘Bishops we here understand to be presbyters, for in one city there could not be many bishops.’ And Chrysostom is no less explicit : ‘What meaneth this? Were there many bishops of one city? By no means ; but by this title, he designeth the presbyters, for then the name was common.’ To such authorities no remarks of mine could give additional weight. If they do not convince, Would conviction follow, ‘though one rose from the dead?’

Another specimen of false, disingenuous reasoning can be so completely exposed, by one of the preceding quotations, that I cannot resist the inclination to place it before you. Jerome is the father, with whom our opponents are the most pleased, and with the utmost triumph have they appealed to his authority, as conclusive evidence that

bishops and presbyters are of the same rank in the ministry. Nothing can be more fallacious. In his commentary upon Titus, and in his epistle to Evagrius, he does indeed prove the original application of the two names to the same individual ; but this, as you have heard, is precisely the doctrine we maintain ; and the only question is, when, according to Jerome, did the identity cease ? or rather, when, and by whose authority, were some of the presbyters elevated to the apostolick office ? We refer this to the time and the authority of the apostles themselves, and assert that it is thus represented by Jerome, in the course of the very passages to which the appeal has been made. His words are, ‘ Before there were, by the devil’s instinct, parties in religion, and it was said among the people, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, the churches were governed by the common council of presbyters.’ Wherein, as we insist, there is a manifest quotation from Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians, and as clear a reference of the change in question to the period when Paul himself governed the church at Corinth. And that our construction is the true one appears also from the fact, that, in his epistle, Jerome assures us, that ‘ at Alexandria, from Mark, the evangelist, to Heraclas and Dionysius, the bishops thereof, the presbyters always named one chosen from among them, and placed in a higher degree, bishop.’ ‘ The change is therefore evidently described by him, as commencing with Mark, the companion of the apostles, and by them made bishop of Alexandria.

These very explicit declarations have, however, been plausibly assailed, upon the strength of some merely verbal criticisms, of which the following have been the most confidently adduced :. Jerome says, ‘ These things I have written to show, that among the ancients, presbyters and bishops were the same. But, by little and little, (paulatim) that all the seeds of dissension might be plucked up, the whole care was devolved on one.’ In another passage he states, ‘ that one was afterwards chosen, who should be set above the rest.’ Such, then, is the prominent ground on which the doctrine is maintained, that this father contends for the gradual introduction of episcopacy.

after the time of the apostles, and of course wholly unauthorized by them. In virtue of these indefinite statements, these artfully construed 'little by little' encroachments, our system is boldly pronounced a usurpation of man's device.

But mark how completely all this showy criticism vanishes from the view, when brought before the best tribunal we could desire. Jerome himself shall decide what Jerome means, in the controverted passages. In that part of his comment upon Galatians, already quoted, he begins with the very word (*paulatim*) on which so much stress has been laid; he clearly restricts its interpretation to the lives of the apostles, and pronounces judgment in favour of the apostolick establishment of episcopacy, in language that must settle the controversy forever, so far as he is concerned. I will repeat it: 'By little and little, in process of time, others were ordained apostles, by those whom our Lord had chosen, as that passage (or speech) to the Philippians affirms, saying, I supposed it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, your apostle.' No more, then, let us hear of Jerome's testimony, as adverse to our views. We desire no stronger evidence from him. It shows episcopacy to have been planted by the apostles, and, praised be his name, God himself hath given the increase.

On the whole, brethren, although I may have fatigued you by a recourse to so many authentick records, I cannot but think, that you must concur with me in the opinion, that the clear, decided, and unanimous testimony of all antiquity is to be found arrayed on the side of our venerable church, and her truly apostolick ministry. In adverting to the principles, with which the discourse was commenced, will you then abide by this testimony? Or, will you prefer to coincide in sentiment with our opponents, as far better qualified to expound the scriptures, and determine matters of fact than they, who were either brought up at the apostles' feet, or were soon after eye-witnesses of the institutions, which universally prevailed, and that were universally considered to have had their origin from men, who spake and acted as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? I will not for a moment permit myself to

doubt, but that your decision will be on the side where scripture and antiquity are known to harmonize, where they combine to erect upon the towers and bulwarks of the church, the ensigns of sacred truth, and of legitimate power and glory.

It is, indeed, strange to me, that well informed Christians should ever arrive at a different conclusion. It necessarily involves them in this plain and palpable contradiction. They readily receive the brief testimony of the fathers upon some subjects, and they reject it upon one, where they are far more voluminous and explicit. For does the baptist deny that the scriptures allow of sprinkling or of infant baptism? After having exhausted, to no convincing effect, the various passages of the bible, which bear upon the controversy, they can confidently appeal to these very fathers, and claim the victory in virtue of evidence derived from them. Do persons contend that there has been no change of the sabbath from the seventh, to the first, day of the week, or the Lord's day? They do not scruple to repair to the same witnesses, nor upon their authority do they hesitate to proclaim a similar triumph.

These, however, are comparatively minor points. There is one of vastly greater moment, and they who persist in discrediting the records of antiquity, in relation to the Christian ministry, put in the hands of the infidel the most powerful weapon, which he can possibly wield against the volume of inspiration. For when he contests its authenticity; when he asserts that the present canon of scripture, including the gospels, the acts, the epistles, and the book of Revelation, is spurious, and no more entitled to our confidence, than the many false gospels, acts, and epistles, which have also descended to our age; how will these persons be able to meet him without recourse to the very men whose testimony they renounce upon the subject of episcopacy, and who, the infidel may therefore argue, are undeserving of the slightest credit upon any other?

See you not, brethren, the dilemma in which they place themselves? Know ye not that all the external evidence, in favour of the integrity of the present copies of the bible,

rests upon the veracity of the fathers alone? Leave them entirely out of view, and there is no longer any certainty about it. The several parts of which it is composed were collected together, not by the apostles, but by them. In the general councils convened by the primitive bishops, it was determined, what books purporting to be written by inspired men were authentick, what were spurious; and by that determination has the Christian world found itself compelled to abide. For once admit that their judgment was wrong in relation to one book, and it would cast a shade of suspicion over the residue. Once admit that their peculiar situation gave them no greater advantage, than we have, to judge correctly, and the infidel may laugh in your face, when you tell him that this gospel was written by Matthew, and that by John; this epistle by Peter, and that by Paul. We are consequently obliged to rely upon them, when we maintain the genuineness of all; upon their proximity to the apostolick age, and the superiour degree of knowledge, which they derived from that single circumstance. And I ask no more, when I appeal to them and their writings in behalf of the church founded by Christ and his apostles. If they are good witnesses in the one case, they are good in the other; while the reverse is equally true, if they are to be disbelieved concerning episcopacy, they are to be disbelieved concerning the canon of scripture. I have no right to tell you that one single leaf of the new testament is a genuine transcript of the original manuscript of its professed author.

You discover therefore, brethren, the importance and the propriety of reposing implicit confidence in the testimony which I have collected from the fathers; and may Almighty God, in his wisdom, enable you to bring the same to good effect; may it cause you to become more and more attached to the church, which, with his own right hand, he hath planted in the vineyard of the world; may it preserve you effectually from being seduced from that communion with it, whose obligation is to be traced to its divine origin and authority; may it induce you to adhere to it, to its apostolick ministry, its pure and spiritual worship, its truly catholick and evangelical doctrines, upon



the same principles of love and affection, which upon an occasion somewhat similar animated the righteous soul of Peter. 'From that time,' says the evangelist, speaking of our Lord, 'from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.' Yes, brethren, the church in her ministry, her liturgy, her articles, her bible, and her great Head; the church has the words of eternal life, and if ye desert her, where will ye find a better? For my own part, I could almost as soon be tempted to desert my Saviour and my God; and therefore, 'For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.' AMEN.

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## SERMON VI.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

I CANNOT but flatter myself that the last discourse delivered upon these words, presented the most clear and invincible testimony from the primitive fathers, of the divine origin of our episcopal ministry; a ministry comprehending the three distinct orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Had it been necessary, I could have extracted volumes of evidence of a precisely similar purport. There is no credible author of that early age whose writings can be brought to bear against me. All speak the same language. All advert to the same organization of

the church of Christ, and seem to be utterly unconscious of any seriously opposing pretensions. They feared, indeed, that they might arise. They knew that the feeling of insubordination was natural to the heart of man, and hence their repeated exhortations to unity, their hostility to schism, their commendation of inferiour ministers and laymen, for continuing in subjection to the chief ecclesiastick appointed and ordained of God to rule over their spiritual concerns. And yet our modern separatists would fain persuade us to a contrary belief; fain persuade us that the apostles committed the ministry of the church to the one single order of presbyters, and that these alone possess a legitimate claim to the execution of its functions. But, on the supposition that they are right, what might we not reasonably expect to find in those remnants of antiquity, to which I have referred you, as having survived the corroding lapse of time? A single dissenting presbyter of the present age, or a synod of presbyters, in addressing a kindred church, would apply the like title to its ministers, and, if there were associate churches, all their pastors would be placed upon a par, and no one would be distinguished from the rest by an appellation implying pre-eminence in ecclesiastical rank and station.

Under such circumstances, and from such a source, an epistle to the presbyters of New York, of Philadelphia, or Baltimore, would be strictly correct; it would correspond with the acknowledged principles of the sect. But if an episcopalian should write, he would either address the bishop alone, or in conjunction with his presbyters and deacons. And how was it in primitive times? Do we in such cases hear of presbyters only? Is no higher office adverted to; no office vested in the person of one individual, and to whom they are supposed to yield obedience, as their superiour in dignity and power? Let Ignatius answer, Ignatius, the disciple of John; and Onesimus will be found to have been bishop of Ephesus, Damas of Magnesia, Polybius of Tralles, and Polycarp of Smyrna. Deacons were in each of those cities: they are named in his epistles, and the inferiority of their station is recognised. Presbyters also were there. Even the scriptures

themselves speak of the elders of Ephesus. Whence, then, if we are wrong, and our adversaries are right, whence this unaccountable language? Why is one individual singled out from all others, and dignified with the title of bishop? Why, if we peruse all early antiquity, do we hear of him only, except in some cases of acknowledged schism, and not of two, three, four, or five bishops, residing at the same time in a city comprising multitudes of Christians, and adorned with numerous temples consecrated to the publick worship of God? Why did Jerome say, 'In one city there could not be many bishops?' Why did Chrysostom ask, 'Were there many bishops in one city?' at the same time answering, 'By no means.' Why did Cornelius, a celebrated bishop of the third century, thus denounce the schismatick bishop, Novatian: 'This jolly inquisitor of the gospel understandeth not that there ought to be but one bishop, in that catholick church, (Rome,) in which he knoweth there are forty-six presbyters?'

Certainly, brethren, if the doctrine of sacerdotal equality be genuine, here is an enigma, that never was, and that never can be solved. But admit the apostolick origin of episcopacy, and the clouds disperse, every difficulty vanishes, the fathers speak intelligibly, and are freed from the imputation of using the grossest misnomers. And, let me tell you, a better argument in our favour can scarcely be imagined. Many bishops in a single place, at the same moment, would have given no slight colour to the idea of their being of the like order with presbyters; but the undeviating evidence of there being, rightfully, no more than one, establishes the permanency of the apostolick office in that one, beyond all reasonable contradiction. Ignatius upon this subject is very definite: 'Be not deceived, brethren: if any one follows him that makes a schism in the church, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If any one walks after any other opinion, he agrees not with the passion of Christ. Wherefore let it be your endeavour to partake all of the same holy eucharist. For there is but one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ; and one cup, in the unity of his blood; one altar; as also there is

ONE bishop, together with his presbytery, and the deacons my fellow servants ; that so whatsoever ye do, ye may do it according to the will of God.'

Strong language this, and not the less worthy of remembrance because Ignatius here insists, that the elevation of a single individual to be the bishop of a city, having many presbyters and churches, is according to the will of God. And where was his authority for the assertion? He knew the scriptures ; few persons have known them better ; and from thence ascertained the location of Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus at Crete. He possessed the book of the Revelation of St. John, his preceptor, and there perceived this aged apostle, under the direction of Christ, writing to the angel of each of the seven churches of Asia. And who was the angel? You have only to read those short epistles, in order to be convinced that it was the name applied to the ecclesiastick possessing supreme power and authority in the church where he resided. Such is the testimony of all the fathers. Not a doubt existed in their minds of the identity, or rather the interchangeable application of the two words, angel and bishop. Hilary, among others, affirms it, contending that Paul 'calls bishops angels, as is taught in the Revelation of John ;' and even the names of the individuals are given, who at that time held the bishopricks of Ephesus and Smyrna. It is, indeed, a remarkable fact, that the angel of the former place is commended in the scriptures, for having exerted his authority in this manner: 'Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.' But how could he do this, if he did not fill the apostolick office himself? if the presbyters of Ephesus, mentioned in the Acts, were associated with him in the same ministerial order? Or why should he proceed to try and examine the pretensions of those impostors if already persuaded that the apostolick office was limited to those originally appointed?

Surely, brethren, these are circumstances utterly at war with the imaginary blending of the three primitive orders into one. On such a principle, I can never reconcile the direction of the epistles to a single person, nor can I ac-

count for the sole jurisdiction he appears to have enjoyed, notwithstanding the presence of a numerous body of presbyters, holding, as it is said, the same rank, and entitled to claim the same power. But, upon our episcopal theory, there is no difficulty, no usurpation of undelegated authority. The two words translated apostle and angel are of the same signification. They respectively import, 'one that is sent,' 'a messenger,' and hence the propriety of Theodoret's expression, in accounting for the change of title, to which I directed your attention in my last discourse. 'Those now called bishops, were called apostles; but in process of time, the name of apostle was left to those who were TRULY apostles, and the name of bishop was restrained to those who were anciently called apostles.' For when he speaks of their being truly apostles, you are to consider that the first of that order were literally 'messengers,' commissioned to 'teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' But their successors in office, being at length permanently settled in separate diocesses, in different towns and cities, the title *ἐπισκοπος*, from which bishop is derived, became more appropriate, inasmuch as it is a compound, answering exactly to our English word 'overseer.' And that this explanation is entitled to full belief evidently appears from the fact, that even James, one of the twelve, or, as most divines believe, the brother of our Lord, was permanently stationed at Jerusalem, and is, therefore, perpetually called by the fathers the first bishop of Jerusalem. The same remark applies to Epaphroditus, to Timothy, to Titus, and to the seven angels, all in virtue of their succession called to be apostles, and yet by all antiquity designated as bishops of their respective cities, owing to their supreme oversight of the churches therein established.

Another, and, as I conceive, an invincible, argument in support of the divine institution of episcopacy, is derived from what is universally admitted by its opponents. For when they tell us that the government of the churches was left by the apostles to presbyters alone, they are forced to acknowledge its extremely limited duration. Ac-



cording to some, it was extinct before the death of St John. Others think that about this time it began to disappear. Others, that by little and little, it gradually vanished during the second and third centuries; while no writer amongst them ventures to assert that it continued, in any part of the world, beyond the term of three hundred years.

Here, then, brethren, permit me seriously to inquire: Is it credible that such a government as this could have been instituted by the apostles; a government so fading and fleeting in its character; a government so soon to be obliterated from the face of the earth, by the unanimous adoption of episcopacy? Verily, verily, I say unto you, it is far too marvellous for my belief, and I cannot but think for yours. Almighty God, in his infinite mercy, establishes one church to-day; his adorable Son, after having purchased it with his precious blood, promises to be with it always, even unto the end of the world; and lo, to-morrow it is not! to-morrow, like Noah's dove, not a resting place can it find for the sole of its foot amongst all the nations that had originally sought a refuge beneath the droppings of its sanctuary! If this be not impliedly disparaging the divine wisdom and foresight, I know not what is. If this be not calling in question the faith and obedience of the primitive Christians and martyrs, so often and so justly extolled, I know not what constitutes faith, nor what obedience. Before one, two, or, at most, three centuries have elapsed, episcopacy, a human invention, completely triumphs over a ministry established under the guidance of heaven, and recommended by men endued with the inspiration of the Highest. If this be true, let us hear no more of the unchangeable character of God, or of the perpetuity of those institutions which he does not expressly abolish. Let us hear no more of the extraordinary piety and holiness of our fathers in Christ. I can only wonder that they had not discarded baptism and the supper of the Lord, as well as the ministry, by which they were to be celebrated.

No, no, brethren, it will not, cannot do. Such a change and perversion of the true church, such a successful usur-

pation over it, will never be seriously credited by persons who can be persuaded to dismiss all bias and prejudice from their minds : who shall enter upon this investigation with a single eye to the discovery of truth ; who shall determine to follow where it leads, and, upon this principle alone, make up their judgment for time and for eternity. Party spirit may make us any thing and every thing ; may for a season blind the eyes and warp the understandings of men ; but almighty truth, with irresistible force, will eventually storm the ramparts of schism, and, in the person of its divine Author, bring back the wandering to his fold again.

Particularly, when I have also to remark to you, that this alleged usurpation on the part of bishops was permitted to take place without one noble effort to arrest its progress ; one burst of indignation from the injured, lifting up their cry to heaven, and invoking the continuance of that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Let us bring the subject home to ourselves ; let us imagine that the existing protestant bishops were to endeavour, either by force, or, combining their efforts, by collusion, to proselytize all the various denominations, and unite them in the one holy catholic or universal church. Would not one voice be raised against it ? not one outcry against persecution ? or, if persecution were renounced, against the subtlety and intrigue of mere propagandists ? You know very well, that, upon such an attempt, the protestant world would rise up in arms against them : they would vigorously repel every assault upon the respective citadels of their religion, and only yield up these beloved sanctuaries of their hearts with their fortunes and their lives. If the sword were requisite, it would leap from innumerable scabbards ; if the pen alone, myriads of writers would exhaust all their theological learning in the contest, they would compose a multitude of books, and these, with the arguments they contained, would descend to the latest posterity.

But be astonished, ye moderns, and wonder at the forbearance, and even the pusillanimity, of the ancients. If bishops were not the successors of the apostles in office ;

if their powers were not derived from them: then did they usurp their station, and lord it over God's heritage, as the expression is, without one exclamation of surprise, or one manly vindication of the church and the ministry it had received by the appointment of the Lord Jesus. All opposition was hushed as the foot of night. Our most recondite opposers can discover no trace of it in ecclesiastical history. They are obliged to levy a tax upon conjecture, whenever they would settle the era of this wonderful revolution; and even then they are unable to agree. Some will have it at one period, and some at another. Rolling centuries intervene and divide their judgment, when it might reasonably be thought, that such an event could no more be obliterated from the memory of man than the era of the crusades, or the epoch of the reformation.

Ancient authors, indeed, and their works are abundant; authors of unblemished reputation and undoubted veracity. But if you search the writings of presbyters, who never attained the episcopal rank, even they are silent on the subject, and mute as the very graves into which they retired. They say nothing of prelatick ambition, nothing about the invasion of presbyterian rights. If you look over the folios of bishops, there are no arguments to justify their revival and personal assumption of the apostolick office: none to silence the clamour of one intrepid champion of the ministry once delivered to the saints. On the contrary, you will see that all those writers, of whatever rank and whatever country: all those writers unite in ascribing to episcopacy the sanctity and the authority of a divine institution. They tell you that the apostles nominated bishops to be their successors in the several churches planted by them. They confine to them the sole right of ordination; and most cheerfully did presbyters acquiesce in the speedy degradation of the few, who obtained an imaginary promotion by the imposition of the hands of their interior order. And what is the fair inference to be gathered from this statement, this undeviating harmony in the records of those early times? To me, it speaks volumes in behalf of our construction of the scriptures. To me, it elevates episcopacy upon a lofty emi-

nence, on which is inscribed, in letters of living light, ‘This is my will, and this is my ministry, saith the Lord of Hosts.’ ‘He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.’

Waiving, however, for the present, the testimony of the fathers, let us imagine it possible to resort to some other tribunal, with the view of determining our conflicting opinions. Let us imagine, that, preserved by some inscrutable providence of God, a Christian church could be found in some sequestered corner of the globe, which from remotest time had enjoyed no intercourse whatever with their brethren professing the same faith. We know that the twelve were despatched on their errands of mercy into far distant lands, and of most of them, that no authentick memorials have been transmitted to us. Imagine, then, that a church of their planting could be found. Would not the character of the ministry it possessed be considered a safe guide, in enabling us to decide upon that which was instituted by the apostles, whose labours are known, although we contrive to interpret them differently? If, for example, presbyters alone were to be discovered in such a church, would it not furnish our friends of that exclusive order with abundant cause of congratulation and triumph? If bishops, with presbyters and deacons in reverent subjection to them, would it not be equally the source of joy and exultation with us? Upon such a statement, it would be next to impossible to avoid either conclusion, or to object to the providential character of the discovery itself, provided it could be effected.

Be it remembered, then, that it has. India was the place, and the celebrated navigator, Vasco de Gama, the discoverer, in the year fifteen hundred and three. ‘When the Portuguese arrived, they were agreeably surprised to find upwards of a hundred Christian churches on the coast of Malabar. But when they became acquainted with the purity and simplicity of their worship, they were offended. These churches, said the Portuguese, belong to the pope. Who is the pope? said the natives; we never heard of him. The European priests were yet more alarmed, when they found that these Hindoo Christians maintained the order

and discipline of a regular church under episcopal jurisdiction; and that, for thirteen hundred years past, they had enjoyed a succession of bishops, appointed by the patriarch of Antioch. We, said they, are of the true faith, whatever you from the west may be; for we come from the place where the followers of Christ were first called Christians.'

Their churches were therefore Syrian, but were soon subjected to the inquisitorial power of Rome. 'At a compulsory synod, one hundred and fifty of the Syrian clergy appeared;' and, by the Romish archbishop Menezes, 'were accused of the following practices and opinions: That they had married wives; that they owned but two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper; that they neither invoked saints, nor worshipped images, nor believed in purgatory; and that they had no other orders or names of dignity in the church, than BISHOP, PRIEST, and DEACON.' At length, 'the churches upon the sea-coast were compelled to acknowledge the supremacy of the pope.' But those 'in the interior would not yield to Rome. After a show of submission for a little while, they proclaimed eternal war against the inquisition; they hid their books, fled occasionally to the mountains, and sought the protection of the native princes, who had always been proud of their alliance.'

These details, I have extracted from the 'Christian Researches in Asia' of the celebrated English missionary, Buchanan; who proceeds to inform us, that when 'two centuries had elapsed without any particular information concerning the Syrian Christians in the interior,' those who would not submit to Rome, and when 'it was doubted by many whether they existed at all,' he 'conceived the design of visiting them.' He did so, and found them in all their original simplicity and purity. He conversed with them freely; and do you wish to know by whom their church was founded? According to their records, by the apostle Thomas. After diligent inquiry, the good missionary says, 'I am satisfied that we have as good authority for believing that the apostle Thomas died in India, as that the apostle Peter died at Rome.' Do you wish to know what was at this time the character of its



ministry? It was composed, as it always had been, of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, the offices being as distinctly marked as those of any episcopal communion whatever. Buchanan saw numbers of the two lower orders. On one occasion, he 'was received at the door of the church by three Kasheeshas, that is, presbyters or priests, who were habited in like manner, in white vestments.' 'There were also present two Shumshanas, or deacons.' On another, he visited 'Mar Dionysius, the metropolitan of the Syrian church,' and after a long interview, in which the conversation turned upon protestant episcopacy, he observes, 'The bishop was desirous to know something of the other churches which had separated from Rome. I was ashamed to tell him how many they were. I mentioned that there was a Kasheesha, or presbyter church, in our own kingdom, in which every Kasheesha was equal to another. Are there no Shumshanas? (deacons in holy orders.) None. And what, is there nobody to overlook the Kasheeshas? Not one. There must be something imperfect here, said he.'

And now, brethren, adverting to my introductory remarks, insisting upon the weight which would be justly due to such testimony as this, could it be obtained, I may, with undissembled satisfaction, exclaim, Strange disclosure! Most gratifying coincidence between our own and the apostolick Syrian church! For other discoveries, the name of the pious and benevolent missionary, Buchanan, has resounded with applause far and wide; but for this, it has been suffered to glide into obscurity by the very men who had been foremost on the roll of his panegyrists. It did not comport with their previous partialities, and was not therefore allowed to diminish aught from their partisan zeal. The time had not arrived, when, by a magnanimous effort, they could conquer all their prejudices, and seriously endeavour, by breaking down the partition walls which now separate the various denominations, to unite them all in the one mystical body, of which Christ our Saviour is the great and glorious head. No, the time had not arrived, and I know not when it will. But this I know, that if this Syrian church, so long secluded from the eyes of

Christendom, had been presbyterian in its economy, we should have never heard the last of those notes of triumph, which would have been chanted throughout the dissenting churches. The decidedly episcopal character it exhibits is what they cannot endure. It substantiates, indeed, all that we are in the habit of maintaining; it proves episcopacy to have been as old as Christianity; but then it lays the axe to the very root of schism, and the tall, umbrageous tree would still lift up its ambitious head, and interpose a dark shade between the nations and the light of revealed truth.

Among other objections to the termination of our sectarian controversies, which I have heard from our protestant brethren, it has been said, that in order to effect it, we must all return into the bosom of the mother, meaning thereby the Roman catholick, church. But, in my apprehension, the objection is founded on views altogether erroneous and indefensible. Can you not reform without annihilating? Can you not correct abuses, without destroying the thing abused? If the bible were to be now printed with numerous corruptions of the received text, could not these corruptions be hereafter expunged, and the inspiration of that bible be still maintained? If our two houses of congress were to enact laws and enforce them, without even asking the approbation of the president, could not such proceedings be revised and corrected, without forming a new constitution? Would it not rather appear that this violated instrument could be redeemed in a legal manner from the hands of its innovators, and be restored in all its original purity and integrity?

Undoubtedly, brethren; and such was the nature and course of the reformation in England. It brought back the church of Christ to its original state. Because the Roman catholicks believed in the bible, the reformers of that age did not reject it. Nor, on this account, did they reject the two sacraments of baptism and the supper of the Lord, nor the necessity of repentance, of faith, and obedience, nor the cross of Christ, nor the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, and a judgment to come, followed by the respective issues of heaven and hell. But all these they retained, as

having their foundation in holy oracles, and therefore worthy of all men to be received and had in reverence. And for a like reason did they adhere to such parts of the external order and constitution of the church and its ministry, as they discovered to be upheld by the express warrant of scripture, and the practice of all antiquity. They did not set up a new church, with a new priesthood; but they reformed the old; they restored it to its primitive beauty and simplicity; they swept away the rubbish of ages, which had collected around its altars, and presented it anew to Christ, as 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.'

There is, indeed, much of misconception prevailing upon this subject. It would seem to be supposed by many, that the claims of papacy were urged and successfully maintained at the first foundation of the church, in imperial Rome. But no such thing: it was long ages after, that the bishop of this city claimed supremacy over his brethren of the same order, and arrogated to himself the title of Christ's vicegerent upon earth. Nothing of the kind appears to have been contemplated by the early fathers. So late as the beginning of the fifth century, we have this pointed and conclusive testimony from Jerome: 'Wheresoever a bishop may have been, whether at Rome or at Eugubium, at Constantinople or at Rhegium, at Alexandria or at Tani, he has the same merit and the same priesthood. The power of riches, and the humility of poverty, do not make a bishop either higher or lower, but they are all successors of the apostles.' And this is the very doctrine upon which the English reformers proceeded. They retained the three original orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, and resolutely and truly maintained that the pope had no more authority over them than they had over him. By apostolick appointment his predecessors were bishops of Rome, and of Rome only. All other jurisdiction was gradually, and as they proved, wrongfully obtained. Among these reformers, were Craumer, Latimer, and others, who were bishops in the Roman church, and their change to the protestant faith did not vacate their episcopal rank. They were as

good and lawful bishops afterwards as they were before. The legality of their commission was as little affected by the displeasure of the pontiff, from whom they withdrew, as it could have been by that of the patriarch of Constantinople. Look at the language of Jerome, and you will readily discern that he fully bears me out in the argument. The apostles appointed bishops to preside over the churches in various cities, towns, and districts of country; but they were all independent of each other, no matter who had the largest, or who the richest, diocess; independent, for the very reason that they were all equally the 'successors of the apostles.'

To this primitive form of episcopacy, then, did the English reformers return, when they disclaimed all allegiance to the triple crown, and defied the thunders of the vatican. The plea of being obliged to retrace our steps, and enter the Roman communion, in order to embrace the mother church, is consequently, in the mouth of a protestant, altogether idle and fallacious. There is no such mother. If there were, Jerusalem is entitled to the honour, inasmuch as it was there that the first church was organized, with James to preside over its destinies.

To illustrate my meaning as clearly as possible, I will suppose that the present pious and worthy bishop at Bardstown, his presbyters, deacons, and laity were to renounce their own and embrace the protestant doctrines. They would then stand in precisely the same attitude which was occupied, at the reformation, by the English episcopal church. A branch of the true primitive and apostolick church would be reformed; but a new one would not be created. There would be the same ministry and the same sacraments. The same good old bishop could continue to ordain and send forth ministers to feed the flock of Christ. In your estimation, in the estimation of all protestants, a papal bull could no more deprive him of his episcopal office, than could an anathema from the see of Canterbury, or from that of Philadelphia.

With such views, views that are founded upon reason and scripture, I am entirely heedless of those ill-advised jeers which are designed to associate our own with the

Romish church, in the familiar relation of a mother and her daughter. Were it true, I have long since learnt that real faith and holiness, undissembled love and benevolence, can be cherished among catholicks, in a manner that would do no discredit to the best protestant in Christendom; and, therefore, while I heartily abjure their doctrinal errors, I will still esteem the practical graces of many of their number, and love them for their works' sake.

In drawing to a conclusion, permit me, brethren, to apologize for the continuance, if not for the length of these discourses. I could not embody all that I have to say within a shorter compass, without materially infringing upon the ulterior object in view. I wish them to be read, as well as heard. I wish, by meeting every supposed, or rather every prominent, objection, and by enforcing every prominent truth, to present the claims of our church before a community but little acquainted with her origin, her doctrines, and her worship, and, for this reason, as little inclined to appreciate her value.

You must, therefore, for a few sabbaths more, continue your forbearance, and indulge me with a favourable audience. Hitherto, I have spoken plainly and decidedly; but I disdain to be influenced by the malice and the bitterness of an evil spirit. Inferences, indeed, may be very fairly and justly drawn, altogether hostile to the belief and practice of many respectable bodies of Christians. But I do not like the baptist the less because he freely and boldly maintains the invalidity of infant baptism, and the necessity of performing the rite, in the case of adults, by immersion. He is, doubtless, honest and faithful to his sentiments, and I like him the better for the freedom and the intrepidity with which they are avowed. How else, if he is right, and we are wrong, how else can we be convinced of our error? For although my own opinion upon these subjects is believed to be fixed and stable as the everlasting hills, yet is it no such trifling affair to be in all things conformable to the institutions of the gospel, but that, upon conviction, I could gladly pass beneath the waters, and emblematically wash away my sins, in the fullest laver of regeneration. Never, then, will I bestow



an opprobrious epithet upon those who deem immersion in riper years essential to baptism, and on this account, with perfect consistency, refuse to all others the privileges connected with their communion.

And what I willingly accord to them, I as confidently demand for myself. In investigating the truths of scripture, it will never answer to be excessively anxious about the consequences. The preacher must not fail to persuade men by the terror of the Lord, because the doctrine exposes a hearer to the pains and penalties of eternal death. Nor must he hesitate to proclaim and defend the true apostolick church of Christ, from the fear of inferentially invading the pretensions of others. But is he satisfied of her divine right and heavenly origin? For her he must exert all the fervour of his heart, all the energies of his soul, all the strength of his intellect, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.

And this, by God's grace and protection, I will continue to do. I will neither start at a shadow, nor tremble at the sound of a voice. I will neither court the phantom good report, without good desert, nor resist the counsels of revelation teaching me, that 'if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.' I would rather win an approving smile from him, in my honest endeavours to promote the cause of his church and of rational religion, than creep to my grave with a coward pace, not daring to venture a word against schism, heresy, and error, nor to hazard an opinion to the prejudice of superstition, fanaticism, and folly. The latter course would, indeed, be both shameful and treacherous; but the former will be sure to bring a man peace at the last, to impart strength and confidence to his departing spirit, and at length land him on those blissful shores, where there is rest, with glory and beatitude, treasured up for the true servants of God, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

## SERMON VII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

HAVING already succeeded in proving that the Roman catholick is no more than a branch of the apostolick church; that the pope has no greater claim to preside over its concerns than any other Christian bishop; and that consequently the English reformation, under the guidance of bishops, only restored things to their original purity and order; I proceed to notice an objection intimately connected with this part of my subject.

For, when we assert that by divine appointment episcopal ordination is alone legitimate and valid, an indelible stigma is attempted to be fastened upon it, owing to the channel through which it has been derived. No matter, indeed, if the bible has been transmitted through the same instrumentality; it is still pure and incorrupt. No matter if the Almighty, by means of the Roman catholick, has preserved to our use the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper; they are not the less sacred and divine. No matter if presbyterian ordination itself, by confession, can only be traced upward through priests of the same communion; not one solitary voice is therefore raised to denounce it, as unwarranted and unscriptural.

And yet, the moment we vindicate the sole right of a bishop to ordain and send forth the ministers of Christ's flock, that very moment all the prejudices existing against, and all the odium attached to, the Roman church, are unhesitatingly brought to act upon us. Episcopacy becomes at once a relick of popery; it is violently assailed as one of the most prominent marks of the beast, and is attempted to be written down and invalidated, under the pretence of this polluted connexion.

But while I am far from being disposed to justify what protestants concur in considering the unhappy errors of a church, that can still boast of her Ganganelli, her Fenelon, and her Bridaine ; it is well to remind you of a principle universally admitted in the science of civil government and of jurisprudence. For who is there to imagine, that the legal acts of a monarch, and even of our own president, are susceptible of being annulled through any stain which may attach to their private characters ? Does it destroy the efficacy of their signatures to the laws of the land ? Does it cancel all their appointments to the offices within their patronage ? Or the judge upon the bench ; does it vitiate his decisions, and vacate the official stations, he has the power to fill ? You know, brethren, as well as I can tell you, that personal purity and reputation have nothing to do with the lawful exercise of established authority. They neither add to, nor abstract one particle from, all vested rights. The same principle prevails in religion. The minister of the gospel may be a concealed hypocrite, he may have a heart as black as ebony ; and still his merely instrumental acts have all the virtue and efficacy they could have, provided they had been celebrated, by the purest hands and heart, in the priesthood of Christ. Although his doctrines be false, and his life abominable in the eyes of God ; upon its being ascertained by his fellow men, those he married are not remarried ; those he baptized are not rebaptized ; those to whom he has administered the holy eucharist, are not therefore to believe that it has not been worthily received. And precisely thus with ordination ; I never knew a dissenting clergyman to be reordained, owing to the secret iniquity of his ordainers being afterwards revealed. I have never heard of an episcopalian divine, upon whom the ceremony was re-performed, because of the acknowledged delinquency of the bishop who first conferred upon him holy orders. And never, no, never, but as a popular argument addressed to the ear, and not to the understanding, never can it be maintained, that the successive ordinations of a long line of Roman bishops have had the effect of vitiating the episcopal office, originated according to the will of

heaven. It would subvert every thing sacred. It would subvert the bible, the sacraments, the ministry, and the Christian church itself. I would indeed have all the ministers of Jesus to wash their hands in innocency, to be zealous and faithful in their holy calling ; but if they will not, if they will prefer to be hypocrites with men, and dissemblers with God ; praised be his name, it defeats not his grace, it disturbs not his institutions, it works no corruption of blood, nor attaints the rights and privileges of their successors to the end of time. Those rights and privileges remain as good and valid as if they had been ordained by the twelve apostles themselves. The argument of the church, in her twenty-sixth article, is conclusive, and, if necessary, could be fully sustained by an appeal to the private characters of numbers of the Jewish hierarchy. 'Although in the visible church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the word and sacraments ; yet, forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their ministry, both in hearing the word of God, and in receiving the sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such, as by faith, and rightly, do receive the sacraments ministered unto them, which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men. Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the church, that inquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences ; and finally, being found guilty, by just judgment, be deposed.'

There is also another objection to our episcopacy, which nothing, but my desire to be very full and explicit in the present discussion, could induce me to regard as deserving a reply. For inasmuch as the principle for which we contend, necessarily demands an uninterrupted succession of episcopal ordination from the apostles' time to our own, this succession has been triumphantly affirmed to be a mere fable. It is said to have been lost in the revolution

of ages, and to have no present existence, save in the vain imagination and usurped authority of presumptuous men.

But to this I answer, that those, whom we are accustomed to honour as the fathers of the church, always preserved with the greatest care the catalogues of bishops in the respective sees, from the beginning; and that they have been in several instances continued down to our own age, as may be seen in the celebrated work of the historian Mosheim. And even admitting that our opponents, in this one particular, are partially right; admitting, contrary to the testimony of the most learned modern divines, that there are defects in those catalogues, that some names are omitted, and others erroneously inserted; all this would not disturb our claims in the slightest degree. For what is meant by an uninterrupted succession? Not the regular and consecutive induction of bishop after bishop, in the same city, town, or country. For had the continent of Asia been sunk in the ocean long centuries since, it would not have impaired the validity of the episcopal office in Europe or Africa; although Palestine in Asia was the country in which that office was first conferred.

Much less is it requisite that the incumbent of any diocese should have been consecrated by his immediate predecessor. The vacancy itself is usually created by death, and then, Would not the ordination of a bishop of Antioch, by the bishop of Jerusalem, of Smyrna, or of Ephesus, be equally legal and binding, as if it had been performed in his lifetime, by the hands of the deceased ecclesiastick? Our friends devoted to the government by presbyters will not deny it. A presbyter of their church, ordained in England, on his removal to this country, can succeed to the ministry of the ablest divine they have ever possessed. And so in the case of episcopacy; no matter where the ordaining bishop resides; all whom he ordains, whether bishops, presbyters, or deacons, retain their orders unto death, although they should repair to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The senior bishop of our country, for example, was raised to the episcopate in London, and his residence on



this side of the Atlantick has not deprived him of his commission, nor are those upon whom he has conferred the same office, the less bishops than they would be, provided he could trace up a line of predecessors in Philadelphia, to the apostolick age. All, therefore, that is essential to an uninterrupted succession, is embraced by the well known fact, that bishops have, from time immemorial, conveyed to others the same ministerial rank and authority they themselves enjoyed, and which Christ and his apostles introduced into the primitive church. The circumstances of time, place, and residence are altogether immaterial. The actual succession has never been lost or impaired, because ever since the first institution of the Christian ministry, bishops have always existed, and always exercised what they considered the exclusive right to ordain and send forth their successors, and other labourers into the vineyard of Christ.

I have already, brethren, adverted to the first successful innovation upon this divinely established ministry in holy things. It was in the beginning of the sixteenth century, after fifteen hundred years of the Christian dispensation had rolled away; and the circumstances attending it are entitled to a brief review. The reformation, commenced by Zuinglius and Luther, had extended to Geneva, a beautiful town of Switzerland, and shortly afterwards the residence of the celebrated Calvin. This great man embraced with eagerness the reformed doctrines, and propagated them with all the zeal inspired by the conviction of their truth; and all the success usually following in the train of piety, learning, and talent. Confining himself, at first, to what were really the corruptions of papacy, he did not immediately introduce the presbyterian form of government. He had himself been a presbyter of the church of Rome, and although he necessarily retained the same office, notwithstanding his change of sentiment upon many subjects, it did not enter into his mind, that he was, in virtue of his inferiour rank, authorized to confer it upon others, by the imposition of his own hands.

Humanly speaking, it was an unfortunate circumstance, that at this important period, there was not in Germany or

Switzerland, in France or Italy, a single Roman catholic bishop, who renounced his opinions and joined the ranks of the reformers. Had it been otherwise, through his instrumentality, the reformation might have proceeded in the most unexceptionable manner. It might, and I am free to declare, that it would. Calvin was not then in favour of a government by presbyters. He advocated no such change. He knew that episcopacy was of divine origin. He was so far from denouncing it as a corruption, that he would gladly have received and acted upon it, in the final settlement of the church at Geneva.

I am free to declare all this, because he has left it upon record. These are his words: 'If they would give us such a hierarchy, in which the bishops have such a pre-eminence, as that they do not refuse to be subject to Christ, and to depend upon him, as their only head, and refer all to him; then I will confess, that they are worthy of all anathemas, if any such shall be found, who will not reverence it, and submit themselves to it with the utmost obedience.' Can any language be more forcible or determinate? He is most anxious for bishops of the reformed religion: 'If they will give us such a hierarchy.' He declares of those who would dare to oppose their pre-eminence in the church, 'They are worthy of all anathemas.'

For my own part, brethren, strong episcopalian as I am, let me assure you, that I could not feel myself justified in using this last expression. I could not find it in my heart to apply it to our present dissenting brethren, although Calvin, contemplating the very circumstances, in which they are now placed, did not hesitate to adopt it. And that this was the result of his sober conviction, uninfluenced by passion or prejudice, appears from the following testimony of Abbot, archbishop of Canterbury, and a warm advocate of the great reformer's peculiar doctrinal views: 'Perusing some papers of our predecessor Matthew Parker, we find that John Calvin, and others of the protestant churches of Germany and elsewhere, would have had episcopacy, if permitted. And whereas John Calvin had sent a letter, in king Edward the sixth's reign, to have conferred with the clergy of England about some things

to this effect, two (popish) bishops, viz: Gardiner and Bonner, intercepted the same; whereby Mr. Calvin's offer-ture perished, and he received an answer, as if it had been from the reformed divines of those times; wherein they checked him, and slighted his proposals. From which time, John Calvin and the church of England were at variance in several points; which otherwise, through God's mercy, had been qualified, if those papers of his proposals had been discovered unto the queen's majesty during John Calvin's life. But being not discovered until, or about, the sixth year of her majesty's reign, her majesty much lamented they were not found sooner; which she expressed before her council at the same time, in the presence of her great friends, Sir Henry Sidney and Sir William Cecil.'

So true it is, therefore, from these authorities, which might be easily enlarged, both from his own works and those of his followers; so true it is, that this eminent divine was fully persuaded of the apostolick claims of episcopacy, and that he earnestly desired to reform the church under its auspices. But bishops were not to be obtained, and perceiving the importance of a settled ministry, he reluctantly availed himself of presbyterian ordination, and for a long time justified his departure from the old paths, on the ground of necessity alone.

And what was the opinion of Luther, even more renowned than Calvin? Speaking of the Romish bishops, and of the duty of obeying them, in the event of their acceding to the principles of the reformation, he says, 'We would acknowledge them as our fathers, and willingly obey their authority, which we find supported by the word of God.'

What was the opinion of Melancthon, universally admired among the reformers for the excellency of his life, and the extent of his erudition? In his apology for the celebrated Augsburg confession, among many similar passages, this is particularly striking: 'I would to God it lay in me to restore the government of bishops. For I see what manner of church we shall have, the ecclesiastical polity being dissolved. I do see that hereafter will grow up a

greater TYRANNY in the church than there ever was before.' And never, brethren, was the prophecy of uninspired man more exactly fulfilled. No wonder that its author elsewhere demands, 'By what right or law may we dissolve the ecclesiastical polity, if the bishops will grant to us that which in reason they ought to grant? And if it were lawful for us to do so, yet surely it is not expedient. Luther was ever of this opinion.' Melancthon, indeed, employs yet more forcible expressions, in a letter addressed to Luther, in the year fifteen hundred and thirty. 'Zuingle,' he tells him, 'has sent hither, in print, his confession of faith. You would say neither more nor less, than that he is not in his senses. At one stroke he would abolish all ceremonies, and he would have no bishops.'

What was the opinion of Beza, the learned friend of Calvin, his colleague and successor at Geneva? 'In my writings touching church government, I ever impugned the Romish hierarchy, but never intended to touch or impugn the ecclesiastical polity of the church of England.' 'If there are any who reject the whole order of episcopacy, God forbid that any man of a sound mind should assent to the madness of such men.'

What was the opinion of Martin Bucer, another highly distinguished reformer? 'By the perpetual observation of all churches even from the apostles' times, we see, that IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY GHOST, that among presbyters, to whom the procuration of churches was chiefly committed, there should be ONE that should have the care or charge of divers churches, and the WHOLE ministry committed to him; and by reason of that charge, he was ABOVE the rest; and, therefore, the name of bishop was attributed peculiarly to those chief rulers.'

Finally, what was the opinion expressed in the articles drawn up by the protestant delegates to the diet at Worms, held in fifteen hundred and twenty-one, by command of the emperor Charles the fifth, and at which Luther himself was present, confuting all his popish adversaries? 'Our learned men have expressly yielded ordination to bishops, if there may be a reformation.'

Is it possible, brethren, to require more favourable testi-

mony than this, in behalf of episcopacy, from the very men who were the founders of a presbyterian ministry, and who only sought to vindicate its adoption upon the plea of necessity? It is sufficient for me. I ask for no greater concessions from those who still adhere to the schism, so deeply and so justly regretted by its authors. I will do honour to the candour and integrity of those early reformers; although I am by no means satisfied with the propriety of their course; in other words, I cannot recognise the doctrine of necessity.

I will explain myself, by supposing that a body of Christians without a minister were to be cast upon some desert coast or uninhabited island, and deprived of all intercourse with their brethren of the same faith. In order to enjoy the sacraments of the gospel, would they be justified in selecting one of their number to administer them, when the apostle expressly says, 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest?' I know of no case where the necessity could be greater. But recollect, that in the course of divine providence, they were placed in this peculiar exigency, and why should they not humbly submit to that providence, and by no act of their own interfere with the previous counsels of his word? I can perceive no good reason for another course, and am convinced, that upon refraining from it, the disabilities under which they providentially laboured, would never be arrayed against them; would constitute no cause for their final exclusion from the kingdom of heaven. But as, 'in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him,' so, in the case of these exiled Christians, would the Supreme Governor of the universe be more pleased with a reverend submission to his ordering of the destinies of men, than with the arbitrary assumption on their part of the ministerial office.

This train of reasoning is even more applicable to the first reformers. They should have reposed more confidence in God, and less in human expedients. They should have permitted their supposed necessity to have



been tried by the test of time; and doubtless he, who overrules all things for the best, would have relieved them from their embarrassment, without their having recourse to that fatal schism, which has terminated in so many heretical doctrines and sects.

But even admitting that the plea of necessity was good at the dawn of the reformation, it cannot be maintained at the present day, when a government by protestant bishops is accessible to all; when the seceders from primitive order can return into the bosom of the apostolick church, and thus compose the divisions and heart-burnings, so injurious to the extended triumphs of the cross. We have no cardinal Richelieu with us to deny the episcopal office to any sect, as he once did to the petitioning protestants of France, telling them, 'If you had that order, you would look too like a church.' But protestant episcopacy is now firmly established, and the reformed churches, wherever situated, can easily avail themselves of its divine sanctions. That they do not is their own fault, as much as it is the fault of the quakers, that they have no ministry and no sacraments.

And here I am compelled, by a sense of duty, to speak of a separation from the original church of a somewhat different character, although the difference is evidently nominal, rather than real. We have amongst us a denomination, respectable for their numbers, and distinguished for the warm fervour of their religion, who, while they reject in terms the ministry of presbyters, do but conform in terms to that of bishops. I need not name them. They trace up their history to the year seventeen hundred and twenty-nine, and had their origin in the partial secession of a pious and talented presbyter of the church of England from the pale of her communion. I revere the memory of that good man, although I cannot but think him to have been egregiously mistaken in the course he deemed it advisable to pursue. In many respects, he was truly a burning and shining light. Upon most doctrinal and practical subjects, he preached wisely and well. What his precise views were upon the Christian ministry, it is now difficult to ascertain. At one time, he would seem

to have discarded episcopacy, and at another, to have retained it. Even in one letter, he says, 'That bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain;' and yet he was 'determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the national church to which' he 'belonged;' and then he speaks of the English bishops as having 'a legal jurisdiction,' which appears to imply the right of the civil government to mould the Christian church and its ministry agreeably to its convictions of the prevailing necessity or expediency.

But whatever may have been his actual meaning, or whatever opinions he may afterwards have embraced, it is certain that he deprecated an entire separation from the church of his fathers, that he died in her communion, that he never ordained a permanent body of bishops, presbyters, and deacons for the spiritual benefit of his English followers, and that they have religiously adhered to his principles and practice.

In relation to his disciples in North-America, he, however, thought himself justified in appointing two gentlemen 'joint superintendents' over them. To one of these he gave, preceded by a suitable preamble, this testimony, under his hand and seal. 'I have this day set apart as a superintendent, by the imposition of my hands and prayers, (being assisted by other ordained ministers,) Thomas Coke, doctor of civil law, a presbyter of the church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ.' But if, by this imposition of hands, any thing more was intended, than the blessing of a good old man upon his fellow-labourer in the ministry, or if the word superintendent was designed to be used as synonymous with bishop, then are we called upon to believe the strange anomaly, that one presbyter, as Mr. Wesley styles himself in the instrument, can advance another to a higher order in the priesthood than he himself possessed; then is the established order of things completely reversed, and inferiours in office are rendered capable of creating and commissioning superiours.

But the truth is, no such power was claimed, and no such promotion was intended. Soon after the ceremony had been performed, Dr. Coke left England, and, arriving in America, forthwith laid his hands upon Mr. Asbury, who was to be united with him in the proposed superintendence. For some time, they contented themselves with their original title; but at length, sensible, perhaps, of its ambiguous character, they concluded upon a change, and announced themselves to the publick, in an address to the father of his country, as ‘bishops of the methodist episcopal church.’

With what propriety, let the benevolent founder of the sect himself attest. In a letter to Mr. Asbury, he thus expostulates with him and his colleague: ‘In one point, my dear brother, I am a little afraid both the doctor and you differ from me. I study to be little, you study to be great; I creep, you strut along. I found a school, you a college. Nay, and call it after your own names! O beware! Do not seek to be something! Let me be nothing, and Christ be all in all. One instance of this your greatness, has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called a bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought. Men may call me a knave, or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never, by my consent, call me a bishop! For my sake, for God’s sake, for Christ’s sake, put a full end to this! Let the presbyterians do what they please, but let the methodists know their calling better.’

And now, brethren, after the recital of language alike perspicuous and emphatick, I ask you, if it can be seriously believed, that its reverend author ever imagined himself authorized, or that he ever designed, to consecrate any man to the episcopal office and dignity? It is impossible; or, if it be possible, it is at least equally rational to believe that black is white, and white black. There is indeed a mystery hanging over this business which a divine of the same church has recently attempted to unfold. But my limits, as well as my inclinations, forbid me to be more explicit.

It must not, however, be concealed that Charles Wesley,

the brother and coadjutor of John, entertained a different opinion of his relative's conduct; and most severely did he condemn it, in a letter to a distinguished divine of our American church: 'I never lost my dread of a separation, or ceased to guard our societies against it. I frequently told them, I am your servant, as long as you remain members of the church of England, but no longer. Should you ever forsake her, you renounce me. Some of our lay preachers very early discovered an inclination to separate, which induced my brother to publish reasons against a separation. As often as it appeared, we beat down the SCHISMATICAL spirit. If any one did leave the church, at the same time he left our society. For fifty years we kept the sheep in the FOLD, and having fulfilled the number of our days, only waited to depart in peace.

After our having continued friends for above seventy years, and fellow-labourers for above fifty; can any thing but death part us? I CAN SCARCELY YET BELIEVE, that in his EIGHTY SECOND YEAR, my old intimate friend and companion should have ASSUMED the episcopal character, ordained elders, consecrated a bishop, and sent him to ordain lay preachers, in America. I was then at Bristol, at his elbow; yet he never gave me the least hint of his intentions. How was he surprised into so rash an action? He certainly persuaded himself that it was right. Lord Mansfield told me last year, that ordination was separation. 'This my brother does not and will not see, nor that he has renounced the principles and practice of his whole life; that he has acted contrary to all his declarations, protestations, and writings, robbed his friends of their boasting, realized the nag's head ordination, and left an indelible blot on his name, as long as it shall be remembered.' And then he proceeds to lament, that he should have lived to see this evil day. He represents the methodists in America to have been betrayed and deceived. He even regards them in the light of a new presbyterian sect. In these last particulars, I fully concur with him. And still the preceding quotation, from his brother's letter to Asbury, convinces me that he adopted too hastily the opinion of that brother's assumption of the episcopal

character. It explains what was before equivocal, in the transaction at Bristol. 'How dare you suffer yourself to be called a bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought,' is not language to be used by the supposed ordainer of him, who ordained Asbury. It rather indicates grief and indignation, that his clerical blessing upon Coke, his probable imitation of the incident, recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Acts, which was not ordination to the ministry, should have been so grossly misconceived. And the subsequent expostulation, 'For my sake, for God's sake, put a full end to this. Let the presbyterians do what they please, but let the methodists know their calling better;' this expostulation clearly shows, that he would not have the presbyter, Coke, much less the lay preacher, Asbury, confer holy orders, after the usurped example of the presbyterians, and in virtue of his alleged concurrence or delegated episcopal authority.

It is also necessary to advert to one other circumstance of an extraordinary character. Coke came to this country, as superintendent, in seventeen hundred and eighty four; but, after having exercised the power of ordination for about six years, he appears to have become extremely dissatisfied with himself, and to have been fully convinced of the invalidity of his supposed episcopacy. In this state of mind, he wrote to bishop White, of our church, proposing a reunion of their respective churches, and expressing his opinion of the ministers already ordained by Asbury and himself: 'I do not think that the generality of them, perhaps none of them, would refuse to submit to a REORDINATION.' In a subsequent interview with that distinguished, and now venerable, prelate, 'there was also suggested by him a propriety, but not a condition made, of admitting to the episcopacy, himself and the gentleman associated with him in the superintendence of the methodist societies.' The projected union was not, however, effected; but to show you that he was still aware of the defect in his assumed official rank, about eight years afterwards, he made a written application to the bishop of London to ordain a given number of travelling preachers in England, for the purpose of administering the sacraments to the people of their connexion.



All these documents I have in my possession, in a printed form; and what do they prove? Most clearly and incontrovertibly, that the church, of which I am speaking, has no such episcopacy as is considered by us, or was considered by its founder and first superintendent, to be authorized and genuine. Of the former, in addition to his own letter, disclaiming in such nervous language the title of bishop, Coke remarks, 'He did indeed solemnly invest me, AS FAR AS HE HAD A RIGHT TO DO, with episcopal authority:' but mark the consequences: 'he went farther, I am sure, than he would have gone, if he had foreseen some events which followed. And this I am certain of, that he is now sorry for the separation.' Of the writer's own sentiments, enough has been already submitted to convince you, that he placed no confidence whatever in his personal pretensions to the office he had exercised. Never did a lawful bishop apply for the reordination of those upon whom he had imposed hands; never could a lawful bishop ask to be consecrated anew. Yet this was the course he felt himself constrained to adopt, and such is the confessedly imperfect fountain of authority, from which is derived the ministry of the methodist church. Presbyterian ordination, it undoubtedly has; but episcopal, it has not.

And believe me, brethren, I regret the circumstance. It is no gratification to me, that its episcopacy is manifestly spurious; nor do I take any pleasure in stating these things, except as matters of fact, open to the inspection of all, and the legitimate subjects of fair, dispassionate inquiry. In this, we are tolerated by the laws of the land, and God forbid that it should be otherwise; God forbid that we should not speak the truth upon a concern so grave and solemn, either from an apprehension of the consequences, or because the truth may give offence. I have learnt a very different lesson of our Saviour Christ, when speaking 'to those Jews which believed on him,' he said, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed: And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

I have learnt, indeed, that 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God,' 'by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him,' never hesitated, on all suitable

occasions, to discourse freely and unreservedly upon all the errors, whether of faith or practice, by which his hearers were liable to be seduced; and I breathe no wish for higher authority to exculpate me for presenting the fullest information upon the subject I have undertaken to discuss. Abuse is one thing, but argument is another. Misstatements are to be severely reprehended, but important facts are worthy of all acceptance. To pretend that they are sometimes of such a nature, that they cannot be conveyed in the spirit of meekness and humility, of charity and brotherly kindness, is altogether idle and extravagant. Can you not reprove the vices of the sinner, without hating his person? Can you not denounce an heretical doctrine, without inveighing against the heresiarch who maintains it? Then are there no real graces of Christianity to soften the heart, to animate the soul, and give utterance to the lips, which should keep knowledge.

For myself, I will yield to none, in the tolerant feelings I delight to indulge. Towards the wise and good of all denominations, my bosom expands with the liveliest fraternal affection and sympathy. I rejoice in the well founded belief, that they are Christians, such Christians as adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour upon earth, and as will hereafter enjoy his blissful presence in heaven. If it were not so, my religion would be a poor, vain, imaginary thing; the scorn of angels, the sport of demons, the precursor of eternal woe. Whereas, I can with truth give the right hand of fellowship to all the saints of the Most High God, let their scriptural views upon some points be ever so variant, and their ministry and worship ever so adverse to my conceptions of the primitive church, and the beauty of its holiness. I can pray for them, and breathe with them the same prayer to heaven. I can sit down with them before the same table of the Lord, and call him to remembrance with thankfulness, as the blessed Author of our common salvation. I can this day, with the utmost cordiality, minister to them the emblematick flesh and blood of our redemption. Through life, I can make allowance for their imperfections, as I wish them to make allowance for mine. I can give honour, where honour, and praise,

where praise, is due. And when my last hour is come, I am sure that it will prove no diminution of my happiness, to be conscious that I can only hope to enter the mansions of glory, in company with myriads on myriads of my fellow Christians of a different persuasion, over whom will be pronounced the approving sentence, 'Well done, ye good and faithful servants; enter ye into the joy of your Lord.'

Nevertheless, I must, while here below, clothed with the garments of mortality, I must contend, most earnestly contend, for the faith of Christ. It matters not to me, to what it relates, whether to internal graces or to external order. It is all holy, it is all divine, and it is all imperative. You have no right to say of one gospel truth, that it is immaterial; or of one gospel institution, that it is either indifferent or superfluous; that it may be acceded to or resisted at pleasure.

Hence I can never reconcile it to my conscience to be so tender of the mere opinions of men, as to lay my hand upon my mouth, and my mouth in the dust, rather than controvert a favourite prejudice, or expose myself to an injurious reproach. But while I live, I will endeavour, through good report and through evil report, to serve the Lord with fear, and of him only will I be afraid. While I live, although it will be impossible to renounce, or even to modify the truths this day delivered, I will not be inflamed by the fires of a persecuting spirit; I will not suffer this fiend of hell to raukle in my heart; I will not cease to remember that 'now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity.' And still, in defence of the true church, the true Zion and Jerusalem, so often and so unjustly assailed, will I neither hold my peace nor rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. **AMEN.**

## SERMON VIII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

WITH the preceding discourses has terminated all that I am at present disposed to offer, in behalf of the divine right of an episcopal government and ministry. When a few more subjects, intimately connected with the prosperity of our Zion, shall have passed in review before us, it will be proper to enforce the general argument, and urge the entire claims of the church, in some closing remarks, designed to inculcate the advantages of unity, and to expose the evils of schism.

So far, I have borne a decided, though, I trust and believe, an unexceptionable testimony against the great body of non-episcopalians, wherever located, and into whatever sects divided. My present object will be limited to those who entertain a widely different opinion from us, and all other Christians, upon the much controverted subject of baptism.

Not, however, that I propose to enter largely upon its discussion. It would occupy too much time. It would interfere with the more prominent design of this investigation, and be liable to divert the attention of the hearer from, what I cannot but consider, a far more interesting and important inquiry. It is, nevertheless, very obvious, that one, among many causes of the separation of our fellow Christians from the church universal, is to be traced to the mode in which we administer the sacrament of baptism, and also to the principle involved by its celebration in the case of infants. Can this cause, in either particular, be fairly and justly obviated?

As to the mode : In the absence of every thing approach-

ing to a positive, verbal command, our judgment must necessarily be guided by such inferences as may be reasonably drawn from the inspired volume. Its examples are always made to vary in their character, precisely as one disputant contends for sprinkling, and another for immersion. They have not, for a length of time, and in all probability, for long ages hence, they will not control the universal suffrage in favour of one common interpretation.

I shall therefore pass them by. I will not accompany our blessed Saviour to the stream of Jordan: For whether the rite were there performed by sprinkling, by affusion, or by immersion; like the circumcision, which he previously endured, it would scarcely form an unalterable precedent for us, inasmuch as it was not Christian baptism; inasmuch as certain disciples at Ephesus, who had before submitted unto John's baptism, were, at the instance of Paul, rebaptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. I will not undertake critically to expound the scriptures, which speak of the man of Æthiopia, of Lydia, or of the jailer at Philippi, nor will I venture to display a profusion of learning, on the original Greek and Hebrew words, whether they actually mean to sprinkle, to pour upon, or to immerse. These things have been argued, pro and con, a hundred and a thousand times, and still the question remains debatable and debated, as it was, when first broached by our modern anabaptists.

I rather prefer to inquire: Is the mode in any sense material? If it had been divinely prescribed, or, which is equivalent, if it had been unquestionably the uniform practice of the apostles to baptize in a particular manner, I would never answer in the negative. But, under existing circumstances, when conjecture must necessarily supply the place of an undoubted record, is the mode in any sense material? Is the inward and spiritual grace betokened by external baptism, in the slightest degree affected by the quantity of water used in its celebration?

Let us examine the matter analogically. There is but one other sacrament appointed in the scriptures of the new testament, and can you tell me the size of the loaf



broken by our adorable Saviour, at its institution? Can you give me the exact weight of the several fragments of that loaf distributed by him to his disciples? No, you can do no such thing. You cannot even tell me the particular species of corn of which it was composed. Nor of the wine; you cannot resolve me, what kind was employed, or what amount was received. Bread and wine were, indeed, consumed, but all these minute details are suppressed. They appear to have been considered beneath the dignity of so solemn and sacred a transaction. In the eyes of our Saviour Christ, quality and quantity possessed no inherent value. His thoughts preferred to rest upon the memorable event, mere physical substances were proposed to symbolize; upon his precious death and sacrifice on the cross for our redemption. No matter, therefore, what may be the kind, or what the measure of the bread and wine, of which we partake in the eucharist; there is as much virtue in them, provided they are received in the spirit of faith, accompanied by thanksgiving, provided they do truly represent unto us the body and blood of our redemption; there is as much virtue in them, as if they were the precise counterpart of the materials originally blessed and bestowed by Christ.

And thus, if there be any safety, any propriety, in reasoning from a strongly marked and unequivocal analogy, thus it is with holy baptism. There is no express command, as in the case of Naaman the Syrian leper, and the waters of our country are as good as the waters of Jordan. We may be either immersed in or sprinkled by them, and if the sacrament be rightly received, our polluted heart and flesh will become clean; we shall resume the heart and the flesh of a little child. To deny it, would be an excess of that very formality, of which the church is so often and pertinaciously, though so wrongfully, accused. It would cause the shadow to outvie the substance; the figure of the seal, the wax upon which it is impressed; and, consequently, our friends of the baptist denomination very properly maintain their opinion on the ground of apostolick usage and divine authority alone. And certainly if that ground were tenable, for one, I would yield to

it the homage of a willing mind. I would renounce all my present sentiments in its favour, lest haply I should be found to fight even against God.

But permit me, brethren, to remind you of a remarkable passage of the scriptures, which powerfully strengthens my convictions of their error. I allude to that wonderful act of condescension on the part of our gracious Lord, when 'he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.' The menial character of the office smote the heart of Peter, and, warmly remonstrating against it, he declared, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean.' You discover, therefore, brethren, the emblematick nature of these words, and their spiritual application. Literally, we know, they cannot be true. We know that the mere washing of the feet cannot cleanse the whole surface of the body. But still, as an emblem of internal purity, it was pronounced, by the highest authority, to be equally significant with a more copious ablution. The hands and the head of Peter were not washed, and yet he was 'clean every whit.'

And what is external baptism but an emblem, the outward and visible sign and seal of an inward and spiritual grace? You must be sensible that it amounts to nothing more, and that I have here presented you with a perfect analogy. You have only to substitute Christian for Jew, with the antitype for the type, and Paul himself will tell you, 'He is not a Christian which is one outwardly; neither is that baptism which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Christian which is one inwardly; and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.' Yes, brethren, in the spirit, and not in the letter. Outward circumcision itself was partial, while the whole heart was sanctified and cleansed. Outward baptism may be performed by

the sprinkling or the pouring of water upon the face, and still this partial 'washing of regeneration' may be as effectually accompanied by 'the renewing of the Holy Ghost,' as if the whole body were momentarily buried by immersion. That such was the opinion of the primitive Christians, is obvious from their constant practice in all cases of emergency, particularly in that of clinicks, or those who by sickness were confined to their beds.

Recollect, also, that the apostles invariably baptized their hearers immediately after their conversion, and that, consequently, upon every profession of a true and lively faith, we are solemnly bound to imitate their example, and by no means delay the applicant for the mystical washing away of sin. But the preacher of the gospel has converted a caravan amid the burning deserts of Africa, or a polar tribe, with whom for nearly half the year, the rivers are congealed to ice. Can any man, then, forbid a cup of water, that these should not be baptized? Must the rite be delayed, until those deserts are passed, and until a summer's sun shall have unlocked the frozen regions of the north? Surely it would not comport with its speedy celebration by the apostles of Christ. The baptist missionary would be obliged to sprinkle, or he would set more value upon the quantity of water, than he would upon that loss of time, for which he has no authority in the sacred volume.

Nor is this the worst feature attending his principles and practice. For it might be contended, that as these cases will rarely occur, so, of the alternatives presented to his choice, it would be better to refuse sprinkling, and incur the danger of delay. I will, then, present him with an unbaptized individual, and there are many such, upon his dying bed. To immerse him is beyond the moral power of man. And if he ardently solicits, if he pathetically pleads to be admitted into the mystical body of Christ, by sprinkling or affusion, must the baptist resist all his importunities, and deny him his heart's desire? The apostles were directed to 'teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things

whatsoever I have commanded you.' And is not baptism here expressly exacted? Are there any exceptions to its observance? Do you find that the twelve, in executing their commission, either excused or repulsed any of the mortally sick and diseased? The respective answers are obvious. Baptism was emphatically required. No exceptions are made. It is not said that the twelve excused or repulsed a single applicant. But were there not many sick in those days? Is not sickness still found to be among the best schoolmasters to bring us to Christ?

How, then, did the apostles act? Did they, under these affecting circumstances, baptize or not? In the absence of all preconceived opinions and prejudices, their course can scarcely be doubted. For the command is imperative; no particular mode is prescribed; and the word, βαπτίζω, is indiscriminately and properly rendered, to sprinkle, to pour upon, and to immerse.

How, then, did they perform the ceremony? We read of some that were carried to Jesus on their beds, and that he healed them. But show me a similar instance of the sick and dying being transported to the water side, and there plunged beneath the waters. The record is not to be found; the instance never occurred; and hence, combined with the preceding views, I conclude that this solemn ordinance was administered, at the house and bed of the invalid, and that he was not refused its sacramental virtue, when, from among the strong and vigorous, there were daily added to the church of such as should be saved. Hence, whenever a baptist divine is called upon to confer the initiatory sacrament of the gospel upon the expiring sufferer incapable of being immersed, I ask, whether it is better to obey the command of Christ, or rigidly to adhere to what must be considered a mere question of form, since ninety nine hundredths of the Christian world oppose his peculiar interpretation of the scriptures? I reply, that if he does err, it is wiser to err on the safer side; wiser not to disobey a positive command to baptize, than to be afraid of falling into a ceremonial error. While I give him all credit for the purity of his motives, and the sincerity of his belief, I cannot but desire him

seriously to reflect, that to refuse an anxious supplicant, and endeavour to quiet his apprehensions upon a modal plea, is scarcely compatible with such passages as this, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to EVERY creature. He that believeth and is BAPTIZED shall be saved.' If I am told as an excuse, that it is afterwards said, 'but he that believeth not shall be damned;' Is not the omitted clause, 'and is not baptized,' substantially supplied in the gospel according to St. John? 'Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of WATER, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' 'Charity hopeth all things, believeth all things.' I hope and believe that many of the unbaptized of Christian, as well as of heathen, countries, will be saved. But charity doth not know, neither do I know. Upon an attentive perusal of the scriptures, the quantity of water is, indeed, with me, a matter of perfect indifference. According to the rubrick and practice of the church, I will not hesitate to employ every customary mode of baptism, and conscientiously maintain the validity of either and all. The apostles laid their two hands upon such as were ordained to be the ministers of Christ; but, should one of their successors in office, by the providence of God, be deprived of an arm, it would not, in my estimation, in the slightest degree, vitiate his subsequent ordinations.

Proceeding, therefore, in this brief survey, I now arrive at that other cause of separation from the church, which is produced by our steadfast adherence to the practice of infant baptism. And here, also, I shall be compelled to waive a consideration of the most common arguments, which have been marshalled for centuries on either side of the question. That derived from the commission to baptize all NATIONS, is, in my judgment, perfectly sound and unanswerable, inasmuch as infants constitute a large proportion of every nation. The same may be said of the proof drawn from the analogy subsisting between the Jewish and Christian churches, and which would be in part destroyed, provided infants were not admitted into the latter; and so of some others familiar to the recollec-



tion of most of you, however conclusive and satisfactory, I do not propose to dwell upon them in the abstract, on account of that very familiarity.

But amid the conflicting opinions of numerous interpreters of the bible: Are you in doubt about the propriety of dedicating your children to Christ, by bringing them to his holy ordinance? Let that bible be examined, and tell me, Where do you find any prohibition? The question is, indeed, frequently reversed, and it is triumphantly demanded, Where do you find any command to baptize infants? We think and believe that we discover it in the commission already referred to; but as our opponents deny this, I shall not enter upon the discussion; I shall prefer once more to recur to the doctrine of analogy, in order to expose the fallacy of their requiring what would be universally considered a positive requisition.

For this purpose, let us advert to the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Throughout the gospels, the acts, and epistles, you can descry no such thing as an express injunction entitling women to its reception; you can disclose no instance of its being actually administered to them. And yet our baptist brethren freely admit them to this blessed memorial of our Lord's crucifixion and death. They cannot consent to indulge in the same kind of scruples, which they urge in relation to infants brought forward to receive the other sacrament. They do not, or will not, perceive that these last are comprised in the expression, 'teach all nations, baptizing them;' but to the word YE, 'except YE eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, YE have no life in you;' 'As often as YE eat this bread, and drink this cup, YE do show the Lord's death till he come;' to the word MAN, 'Let a MAN examine HIMSELF, and so let HIM eat of that bread, and drink of that cup;' to these words they can attach a far more extensive signification, and easily reconcile themselves to the idea of their embracing the female portion of society. All doubts and difficulties are here readily overcome. They never ask, with an air of triumph, Where do you obtain direct and unquestionable authority for permitting women to partake of the holy eucharist? And thus I prove to you the fal-

lacy and inconsistency of their imposing question pertaining to infant baptism; thus I prove to you, that the form preferred by us, Where do you find any prohibition against it? that this form is far more correct, and at the same time strictly conformable to the example they exhibit in a no less important particular.

And then as to the prohibition itself; in vain shall any man search the scriptures with the view of producing it. It exists not on the sacred page, and that it existed not in the mind of Christ, is evident from the circumstance to which I shall now call your attention. As the Jews, to whom the gospel was first preached, and by some of whom it was joyfully received; as they had been accustomed to see their infants enrolled among the members of the Hebrew church, it were no more than reasonable to expect that they should be clearly apprized of the alleged change in relation to the Christian, if such a change was divinely authorized. It was thus with the innumerable rites and ceremonies which Paul appositely termed 'a yoke of bondage.' They were explicitly abolished, though not the benefits attending them. The absence of the sacrifice of sheep, and of oxen, and of the fat of fed beasts, was more than compensated by the sacrifice of the true paschal Lamb. But if there were any benefits accompanying circumcision, and to deny it were impious, then, if we have nothing answering to it in the Christian economy, then are our children less favoured of heaven than were the children of the Jews, and even of the proselytes to their church, from among the surrounding heathen. And all this without one intimation from God, one such plain declaration as this: Your children must arrive at the years of discretion, they must be personally capable of believing in Jesus, and of truly repenting them of their sins, before they can possibly enjoy, through baptism, the privileges bestowed in the new dispensation of grace and glory. Is it possible to believe it? Never, no never, can I consent to embrace a doctrine so adverse to the interests of our little ones, and, therefore, so much at variance with the benevolent character of their Father in heaven. While its tendency is, in this important particular, to exalt

the Jewish above the Christian church, I can never receive it upon the mere ground of inference. I must have something more explicit to prevent me from applying water to infant brows in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. It would ill accord with the affectionate manner of our Saviour, when he says, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.' It would contradict the testimony of Peter, in the first apostolick sermon: 'Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your CHILDREN, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.'

And strongly, brethren, am I fortified in these opinions by another circumstance, to which your attention must be drawn. How extremely devoted were the Jews to the long cherished rites, ceremonies, and doctrines of their religion! How tenaciously did they regard them, and with what impatience did they look upon the smallest innovation proposed by our Saviour and his apostles! Sanguinary as was the initiatory rite of their ancient church, they yet leaned to it with the utmost bigotry of attachment, after they had received the Christian name. They could not endure the presence of a converted Gentile. But 'when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.' And afterwards, at Antioch, 'certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.' Even two of the apostles found it difficult to divest themselves of their early prejudices upon the subject, as we may learn from this narrative of Paul. 'When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled, likewise, with

him ; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.'

You may learn, therefore, from these passages, and many more might be adduced ; you may learn how wonderfully reluctant the Christianized Jews were to surrender one of the least prepossessing features of their exploded economy. How they contended with the apostles for admitting the Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel in their uncircumcised state, and how, under this supposed privation, they denied the possibility of their being saved. And now, I demand, is it credible that they who could thus argue and thus resolutely contend in favour of continuing a mere external ceremony ; is it credible, that they should entirely overlook the circumstance of their children being denied an entrance into the Christian church by any ceremony whatever, which must have been the case if infant baptism did not supply the place of circumcision ?

Surely, brethren, it is not natural ; it corresponds not with the tender and affectionate feelings of parents towards their offspring ; it militates extremely with the well known history of a remarkably rebellious and gain-saying people. I should much sooner have expected to witness, throughout their intercourse with the apostles, the loudest murmurs and complaints against the new order of things. In some such language as this, they would have been very apt to denounce them, and all their adherents ; You pretend to meliorate our condition, and to take away a yoke, which you tell us neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. Why, then, this dreadful outrage upon our natural sympathies ? Why do you give us a church which is to deprive us of our beloved children ; which refuses to embrace them in its sheltering arms ; which would rend asunder the ties so long and so happily preserved in our own inestimable Zion ? It is no good thing that we hear of you ; we cannot away with it ; we reject it with the utmost scorn and indignation ; we are free to declare unto you, that we greatly prefer our native altars ; where our children are, there will we be ; we will live and we will die with them.

Yes, brethren, something of this kind I should certainly have expected from Jewish auditors, especially when the new doctrine, excluding infants from the church, was first broached, and before they could have become familiarized and reconciled to it by the persuasive arguments of inspired men. And yet, not one syllable of the kind was ever advanced. The opposers of the gospel, who bitterly inveighed against our Saviour for permitting his disciples to pluck a few ears of corn upon the sabbath day; who reviled him for healing the sick at this season of sacred rest, never once thought of objecting to the church planted by his apostles, in consequence of this alleged innovation. Even they who joined it, and were so desirous of incorporating with it their favourite circumcision, never protested against so extraordinary a departure from the old paths. Their children are not so much as alluded to. Their pretended disability does not extract so much as one tear from parental eyes, nor one exclamation of surprise or remonstrance from parental lips. About little things they were loud and vehement in their opposition; but about this, so infinitely exceeding them in interest and importance, so deeply calculated to wound the tenderest sensibilities of their hearts, about this they were silent and unconcerned as the dead in their graves: Not only fathers, but mothers. 'In Rama, was there' no 'voice heard,' no 'lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and' refusing to 'be comforted, because they' were exiled from the pale of the New Jerusalem.

Wonderful silence! Admirable stoicism! How are we to account for their existence? How are we to reconcile such glaring inconsistency? Simply by endeavouring to remove the veil from the eyes of the blind, and confidently asserting that there was no cause for excitement, no room for animadversion, no disfranchising decree pronounced against the children of Christians. Into the bosom of the church they could be admitted by baptism, as their predecessors had been previously admitted by circumcision. Had it been otherwise, all Judea would have been inflamed with resentment, the Holy Land would



have glowed with indignation. But the unbroken silence of scribes and pharisees, of hypocrites and sinners, of believers and unbelievers, of apostles and disciples; this very silence furnishes a testimony in behalf of infant baptism which the collected wisdom and ingenuity of its adversaries can never overturn.

With this negative, though conclusive, evidence, the records of antiquity uniformly agree. Not one primitive writer denies the usage to be of apostolick origin. Whoever traces it up to its source gives to it the sanction of this inspired authority. Justin Martyr, of the second century, the celebrated author of an Apology for the Christians, speaking of certain believers, observes, 'A part of these were sixty or seventy years old, who were made disciples to Christ from their infancy;' and I know of no other process but baptism by which infants could have been made disciples.

Irenæus, a contemporary already mentioned, asserts that 'Christ came to save all persons, who by him are born again unto God, infants and little ones, and children, and youths, and elder persons;' and as our baptist friends will not contend that they were born again through faith in Jesus, how can they reconcile with their opinions his acknowledged application of this phrase to 'infants and little ones?'

Origen, of the third century, is still more direct: 'Infants are baptized for the remission of sins.' He also assures us that 'the church hath received the tradition from the apostles, that baptism ought to be administered to infants.'

Cyprian, after the lapse of one hundred and fifty years from the death of the apostles, with 'sixty six bishops' sitting in council at Carthage, decided that 'the church had allowed of it, yea, that children had better right to baptism than elder persons.'

The pious and learned Augustine, of the fourth and fifth centuries, declares, 'The whole church practises infant baptism; it was not instituted by councils, but was always in use;' and again, 'This the church has always maintained.'

Testimony of the same character might be easily multiplied to an indefinite extent; but these extracts are sufficient; they are corroborated by the practice of the Syrian

church discovered by Buchanan, and must prove eminently satisfactory; if you reflect that these holy fathers had no slight foundation in the scriptures to justify both the decisive language they employed, and that celebration of infant baptism which they maintained, and of whose existence in their own times, they at least are credible witnesses. For when our Saviour says, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God;' Why should we obstruct the only visible avenue to the arms, which once encircled and blessed them, and thus refuse them that baptism, by which alone they can be united to his mystical body, the church? When he affirms, 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein;' Why should we contravene his word, and insist that men and women are alone capable of that reception? When he declares, 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which BELIEVE in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea;' Why should we proclaim them void of the only faith, which our Saviour could have contemplated, the faith of believing friends and relatives bringing them in pious charity to his holy baptism?

The truth is, that our divine Lord perpetually makes our own admission into his glorious church and kingdom to depend very materially upon our growing resemblance to the innocence and simplicity of the infant mind. And I must confess to you, that my understanding is not sufficiently acute to perceive the propriety of that opposite doctrine and practice, which require of children, that they must lose their state of negative innocence, that they must grow up into men and women, and become like them, by being defiled with the many pollutions of sin, so as to be able to repent and turn to God with works meet for repentance; which require all this of children, before they can enjoy through baptism the privileges and benefits of a church, of which Christ evidently considers them the fittest and the purest members. My understanding is not sufficiently acute for this, and, therefore, brethren, instead of insisting, that your infants shall become as you are, before

I can consent to minister unto them the sacrament of baptism, I prefer, after the manner of the faithful and true Witness, to exhort those of you, who remain unbaptized, to resemble them ere you venture to seek this instituted mode of admission into the visible kingdom of God.

On the whole, it would appear that our adherence to the doctrine of infant baptism furnishes a no more valid plea for a separate church and communion, than does the manner in which the rite itself is celebrated. The bias, springing from early and deep-rooted prejudice, may not, indeed, permit each individual among us to perceive the force and strength of the arguments submitted; but even when they are partially obscured by this, or some other congenial, cause, it is of no trifling consequence to connect, with the whole subject, the claims which we maintain, from having in our possession the authorized ministry of the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

I remember that this gracious Being once demanded, 'Whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?' And hence a similar question strikes me as extremely apt and cogent; Whether is greater, baptism, or the church and ministry, which through Christ sanctify baptism? I think it extremely apt and cogent, because the correctness of the similitude and of the parts, of which it is composed, cannot be reasonably denied. Of the only fair and true solution, I leave you to judge, merely remarking, that the thing conferred can never be greater than the authority by which it is conferred. Where, then, is that authority? To whom has our Saviour Christ, by his apostles, so clearly committed the ministry of reconciliation, as to promise that he will be with them; that he will acknowledge all their acts, and sanctify them to the soul's health of such as rightly receive them? I reply, to the legally ordained ministers of his own church, and not to those who venture to administer the sacraments, and preach the word in churches, that were never heard of prior to the era of the reformation; who contest the mode and the subjects of baptism, without previously vindicating their authority to baptize, in any mode whatever.

And may Almighty God, of his infinite mercy, give you wisdom to discern, and grace to follow and obey from the heart, that form of doctrine which has been delivered you. May it prove unto you not only profitable for doctrine, but for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that ye may be perfect, that ye may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And to him, the Father, to the Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, in the Unity of an ever blessed Trinity, shall be ascribed all the honour, and glory, and dominion, and praise, world without end. **AMEN.**

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## SERMON IX.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

You are aware, brethren, that the defence of the church, in which I am now engaged, is founded upon her close adherence to divine institutions. Usages indifferent in themselves have not been brought forward in a prominent manner. They must be debated and settled on the sole ground of expediency, and be left subject to such after changes or modifications as the sage and judicious may consider advisable. But when you approach the sacred volume, no longer may you determine for yourselves, by presuming to annul what God hath established. No longer may you hesitate to put forth your best exertions, in endeavouring to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things. His ordinances are holy. His commands are imperative. They must be revered, and they must be obeyed. Wherever violated, wherever discarded in favour of the 'witty inventions' of men, ignorance is the best

excuse, the only admissible plea; and even this, in those cases merely, in which essentials are still preserved, and the heart is sensibly alive to the righteousness which is of God by faith.

And happy am I, in the belief that this truly benign and merciful Being will not be severely strict to mark offences; happy in believing that, 'if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.' So that if he knows nothing of episcopacy, nothing of its divine authority, to condemn him, who, under different circumstances, would gladly embrace it, comports not with the pleasing views I am delighted to cherish, in relation to the goodness, and benevolence, and mercy of our Father in heaven.

It is for the obstinate and refractory, the presumptuous violators of his will and word, that he will hereafter muster all his terrors, and visit them with his sore displeasure. For them it will prove no slight affair, to have attempted all in their power to rob his church of its glory, his ministers of their authority, and his gospel of its intended harmonious influence over the hearts of men. But, at the great day of account, a rigid inquiry will be instituted, if I may be permitted the expression, a solemn inquest held over the mangled body of Christ; when some such interrogations as these will be very apt to put down the high look and the proud heart of the scorner: Why did ye cast off the Zion of my choice, and the spouse of mine Anointed? Why did ye cease to 'walk about Zion and go round about her,' to 'tell the towers thereof,' to 'mark well her bulwarks' and 'consider her palaces, that ye' might 'tell it to the generation following?' Why did ye forsake her, the true bride of 'the fountain of living waters,' and in preference hew out to yourselves 'cisterns, broken cisterns, that' could 'hold no water?' I gave ye my sabbaths and my sanctuaries, but ye have polluted them by your strifes and contentions; my church, but ye have wasted it with heresy and schism; my ministering servants and ambassadors, but ye have lifted up the heel against them, and usurped their office; my gospel and its ordinances, but ye have moulded the one after the im-



agination of your own hearts, and renounced the other in compliance with human counsels and worldly prejudices. Yes, brethren, interrogations and declarations, such as these, will doubtless probe the disembodied spirit of many a wanton schismatick in the day of recompense, and no easy matter will it be found to disarm the arrows of the Almighty of their sting, and extenuate numerous flagrant departures from the written word.

In the number of these, I have ever regarded the rejection of the holy rite of confirmation, or the laying on of hands upon private Christians, as among the most extraordinary and unjustifiable. It is, indeed, a subject little thought of, and consequently little understood, in this western world. Few, perhaps, have ever heard of such an institution, or, if they have heard, it has been from the mouth of the reviler, branding it as one of the many remnants of papal superstition, originally devised during the dark ages, and surreptitiously brought to light in the hope and expectation of bewildering the intellects, and fettering the consciences of men. With what justice, with what sincere reverence for divine and heavenly things, I propose to examine, and great will be my disappointment, if a failure should ensue, in this attempt to establish the scriptural foundation of the rite, its repeated celebration by the apostles, and its universal reception in the primitive church.

To begin with its scriptural foundation; I know of but one passage where it is specifically spoken of in the abstract, or disconnected with its commemoration. But then so clearly and distinctly, that he who runs may read and understand. It is by St. Paul, in the sixth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews; St. Paul, who had previously rebuked certain disciples for their ignorance of 'the first principles of the oracles of God;' who had accused them of becoming 'such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat;' although it 'belongeth to them that are of full age;' and who, from these premises, drew the inference, 'therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards

God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of LAYING ON OF HANDS, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.' As if he had said: Let us no longer linger in the vestibule, when we should penetrate the interior edifice, of the gospel. Let us no longer be obliged to investigate and master its primary truths and fundamental axioms. These should be already familiar to our minds, and instead of requiring additional research, we had much better evince their practical influence on our lives, by relinquishing all doubtful disputations about their efficacy, and all subtle inquiries pertaining to their general obligation. As the rudiments of our Saviour's doctrine, we cannot fail to embrace them; we might as well renounce him for our teacher, as attempt to forego them; we must confide in them, as divinely ordained, and unsusceptible of change; so that not laying again their foundation, not daring to question their integrity, we must leave them as so many undoubted principles indelibly written upon our hearts, and happily enabling us to perfect our pursuit of religion, from a full persuasion of their elementary truth.

With this fair and natural construction of the apostle's argument, I proceed to remark, that he enumerates the 'laying on of hands,' among the leading articles of the Christian faith. But lest it should be thought to refer to ministerial ordination, your attention is invited to a very plain and radical distinction. Ordination is a ceremony necessarily limited to such as devote themselves to the work of the ministry. It has not the universal application involved by the language of Paul; who addresses himself to the great body of his countrymen, and not to the clerical orders; who invites them, without any discrimination whatever, as believers, and not as evangelists, to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ. There is, consequently, no reasonable pretence for singling out one article from the residue, and confining its operation to any one description of men. In this case, it would be not so much one of the constituent principles of the gospel, as the prescribed mode of designating the authorized teachers of those principles.

Besides, in the passage before us, it is associated with

subjects having the most comprehensive signification. Repentance and faith are required of all. Baptism is an ordinance from which no Christian can rightfully plead exemption. The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment are events in which all mankind will hereafter participate. Confirmation or the laying on of hands must, therefore, by the rule of analogy, be a doctrine of equal obligation and extent. For no other reason was it classed with principles constituting the basis of our religion; for no other reason was it enumerated immediately after baptism, but to show its proper place in the order of events. As faith follows repentance, and an eternal judgment the resurrection of the dead, so does, and should, the laying on of hands succeed to the reception of baptism.

But not to detain you longer with inductions, however legitimate, let us advert, brethren, to apostolick usage, to facts, which have ever been considered stubborn things, and that will be found to bear me out most triumphantly in this course of reasoning. In the eighth chapter of the Acts, it appears that when Philip, one of the seven deacons, 'went down to the city of Samaria,' 'preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.' And still, something more was deemed essential to the completion of their Christian character. Nor is the reason withheld. It was because the Holy Ghost 'was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.' Hence, 'when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.' And then, continues the inspired writer, 'then LAID THEY THEIR HANDS on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.'

Could any narrative be more satisfactory? Both men and women were the subjects of baptism, and of the subsequent rite. It could not, therefore, be the same with ministerial ordination. Is it possible for any history, written for our instruction, to be more minute and circumstantial, or to exhibit a more practical commentary on the sixth

of Hebrews? St. Paul, in that chapter, speaks of six distinct principles of the doctrine of Christ, and here were two of them publickly administered in the precise order in which they are there arranged; the baptism of private Christians, by Philip the deacon, being almost immediately followed by the laying on of the hands of Peter and John, the apostles.

Nor are we to wonder at the alacrity of their attendance. It was the first attempt to spread the doctrines of the risen Saviour beyond the borders of Judea, and this circumstance rendered it highly important that every thing connected with the transaction should assume the form of an established precedent, and as such be handed down to future ages, as worthy of all imitation. But as Philip was only a subordinate officer in the church, he could not celebrate the rite of confirmation, and the apostles instantly deputed two of their number to remedy the deficiency; in what they considered a pressing exigency, to celebrate this holy ordinance. So that notwithstanding the neglect and practical contempt, which it sustains in this eventful age, at the hands of the seceding churches; believe me, brethren, it should be with us a source of unfeigned pleasure to reflect, that the first mission ever undertaken by the apostles, in their character of evangelists, was for the express purpose of imposing hands upon the baptized converts of Samaria.

Neither let us be persuaded to think ourselves released from its reception, on the ground that the course pursued was extraordinary in its character, and restricted in its design. For if this be true, How could the laying on of hands be termed one of 'the first principles of the oracles of God?' How are we to account for its being again resorted to in the instance of the twelve disciples of John, whom St. Paul met at Ephesus, and directly inquired, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they

should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had LAID HIS HANDS upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.'

See ye not, therefore, brethren, how completely the whole tenour of this transaction corresponds with the preceding? In that, baptism was followed by confirmation and the descent of the Holy Ghost: So in this. In that, it was an inferiour minister who baptized, and apostolick hands that confirmed: So in this. Paul having elsewhere thanked God that he had baptized none but Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas. And what additional evidence can any man in reason require, either in favour of confirmation itself, or in proof of its being only performed by the highest order in the Christian priesthood, an order now known to episcopalians alone; in whose judgment, and as you have already seen, in the judgment of all antiquity, bishops are the duly authorized successors and representatives of the apostles, by whom they were exclusively empowered both to ordain and confirm in the one holy universal church? What additional evidence can any man in reason require?

I repair as usual to the fathers of the primitive church, and find myself at once surrounded by testimony inferiour only to that of the apostles. Among the most renowned of them is Tertullian, a writer of acknowledged merit of the second century, about eighty years after the death of John. He informs us, in the clearest terms, that 'After baptism is the laying on of hands; by blessing and prayer inviting the Holy Spirit, who graciously descends from the Father upon the bodies cleansed and blessed by baptism.' And again, 'The flesh is sealed, that the soul may be defended; the flesh is shadowed by imposition of hands that the soul may be illuminated by the Spirit.'

To him succeeded, after the lapse of fifty years, Cyprian, the famous bishop of Carthage, who is not less explicit in his language, and, indeed, traces up confirmation to the apostles themselves: 'They who believed in Samaria were baptized; prayer was said over them, and hands laid



upon them, that the Holy Ghost might be invoked and poured upon them; which,' he continues, 'is still the custom with us, that they who are baptized into the church, should be solemnly dedicated by the bishops of the church, and may receive the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands.'

Cornelius, of the same age, and bishop of Rome, speaking of a celebrated disorganizer, uses these remarkable words: 'Though Novatus were baptized, yet being not consummated with the seal of confirmation, he could not receive the Holy Ghost.'

Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who flourished in the middle of the fourth century, reminds the youthful Christian, 'Thou hast received the spiritual seal; God the Father hath sealed thee, Christ hath confirmed thee.' And elsewhere, 'By imposition of hands, it is believed, the Spirit may be received, which is wont to be done after baptism, by the bishop, for the confirmation of unity in the church.'

More copious evidence than this cannot surely be expected; it supersedes the necessity of argument, and I will only annex the equally satisfactory account of Jerome, who lived in the fourth century, and who observes, 'It is the custom of the church for bishops to go and invoke the Holy Spirit by imposition of hands, on such as were baptized by presbyters and deacons, in villages and places remote from the mother church.' 'Do you ask,' he says, 'where this is written? In the Acts of the apostles,' is his reply. Words more definite or luminous, cannot be chosen, and when united with the preceding extracts, they form the unequivocal testimony of numerous highly distinguished and pious Christian divines of the primitive church, in favour of the apostolick origin and universal observance of confirmation, or the laying on of hands, upon the disciples of Jesus.

Who, then, shall presume to disparage its virtue, or to pronounce it an innovation upon ecclesiastical discipline and the ordinances divinely established? Are we wiser than the fathers, more competent to understand the facts recorded in the scriptures, and better qualified to bear testimony to the doctrines and institutions, which obtained

in the earliest times? Are we even wiser than those scriptures themselves, than Paul, and Peter, and John, who spake and acted as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? Let me not hear of Roman catholic corruptions, a most favourite theme, with which to impose upon the prejudices of the multitude. This rite and these testimonies existed long before the rise of popery, and the single circumstance of its unlimited adoption speaks volumes in behalf of its heavenly origin.

Upon no other principle can we account for the undeviating practice of it, on the part of all Christendom. If it had been the invention of uninspired men, opposition would have discovered itself in some quarter or other. But in the best and purest ages, it appears to have been as extensively known and embraced as either of the sacraments; an event that would have been morally impossible, had it not commenced in demonstration of the Spirit and in power; and, therefore, Jerome boldly argues, ‘If there were no authority of scripture for it, yet the consent of all the world, in this particular, is as good as a command;’ that is, as clearly shows its apostolick derivation. You cannot say this of presbyterianism or of publick extemporary prayer; they never were universal; they sprung into existence in the sixteenth century, have always been strenuously opposed, and are still neglected by an immense majority of Christians.

Happy, then, brethren, are those who adhere to a church, under whose auspices they may yet enjoy the sanctifying ordinance under review; this merciful medium of grace, recommended to our affectionate regard, as well by its divine sanction, as by the universal usage of all, who, for the first fifteen centuries of the Christian dispensation, named the name of Christ.

And even when the reformation in continental Europe introduced, through what was deemed necessity, a new order of things, throwing away, with the tares of superstition, many pure grains of heavenly wheat; even then, it was but slowly, and with great apparent reluctance, that the rite of confirmation was abandoned. I gather this from Calvin, who would seem to identify it with the lay-

ing on of hands, enumerated among the rudiments of Christianity by St. Paul, and who remarks, that ‘Young persons, when their infancy was past, and they had been instructed in their faith, offered themselves for catechism, which they had after baptism; but another rite was applied, viz: the imposition of hands.’ In another work, the fourth book of his institutes, he even explains the benefits attached to its celebration, saying, ‘It was an ancient custom in the church for the children of Christians, after they were come to years of discretion, to be presented to the bishop, in order to fulfil that duty which was required of adults who offered themselves to baptism. For such persons were placed among the catechumens, till, being duly instructed in the mysteries of Christianity, they were enabled to make a confession of their faith before the bishop and all the people. Therefore, those who had been baptized in their infancy, because they had not then made such a confession of faith before the church, at the close of childhood, or the commencement of adolescence, were again presented by their parents, and were examined by the bishop according to the form of the catechism, which was then in common use. That this exercise, which deserved to be regarded as solemn and sacred, might have the greater dignity and reverence, they also practised the ceremony of imposition of hands. Thus the youth, after having given satisfaction respecting his faith, was dismissed with a solemn benediction.’

Thus you perceive, that while he acknowledges it to have been required of persons baptized in adult years, he also admits that the custom was very ancient in relation to such as were baptized in infancy. Afterwards, he confesses that Jerome considered it ‘a custom of the apostles,’ and that he represented it to have been ‘committed wholly to the bishops.’ The great reformer was indeed utterly opposed, as we are, to the Roman views of confirmation being a sacrament of the gospel; but still, at the conclusion of the passages I have cited, he observes, ‘Such imposition of hands, therefore, as is simply connected with benediction, I highly approve, and wish it was now restored to its primitive use, uncorrupted by superstition.’

How similar to the solicitude expressed by Melancthon on the subject of episcopacy: 'I would to God it lay in me to restore the government of bishops.' But alas! it is more easy to open the flood-gates of error, than, once opened, to arrest the desolating progress of the stream. The reformers found it thus. Melancthon sighed in vain for an apostolick ministry; Calvin, for what we contend to be the equally apostolick rite of confirmation. They could not control the waters themselves had taught to flow. Carried away by the impetuous torrent, they could not prevail upon the new churches to retrace their misguided steps. Luther was wiser; he retained the rite under discussion; it is still practised in the Lutheran churches, and by those in Bohemia. But by our own diversified sects it is altogether renounced; it is reserved to episcopalians alone to yield a hearty obedience to its scriptural authority, and to partake of its spiritual blessings.

Individuals, however, have deeply lamented its suppression. In the practical discourses of Colman, a distinguished congregationalist of Boston, in the former part of the last century, I find this decisive testimony in its favour, closing with a quotation from Ostervald, a yet more distinguished Swiss presbyterian of the same age: 'The confession of the name of Christ is after all very lame, and will be so till the discipline which Christ has ordained be restored, and the RITE OF CONFIRMATION be recovered to its first use and solemnity. The reason why the one is dwindled into a useless name is because the other is lost. There is a discipline which our Saviour has instituted, which should be to his church forever a sacred and inviolable rule. The honour of religion and the safety of souls call for it. The first and grand defect, in church order, seems to me to be the abuse, or the total want of a regular recognition of the baptismal vow, by those that have been baptized in their infancy, as they grow up. If this were strictly attended, so would the exercise of a severe watch in all likelihood continue, and the administration of just censures would follow upon occasion. But a false step being made here, runs us into great confusion and disorder. Your external profession of the Christian faith is very imperfect, without

a publick serious declaration of it, in the face of the congregation, at the demand of your pastors, when you come to years of discretion. It is not enough that you have been baptized, and had a Christian education, and have given your attendance upon the publick worship of Christ, from your infancy; but you are to say that you stand to your baptism, and take that vow upon you, and CONFIRM and ratify all that was done by your parents, in the solemn devoting you to God from the womb. This is the most explicit act of confessing Christ, that is done by a Christian ordinarily in his whole life. And while we NEGLECT it, we give the adversary of infant baptism a great advantage to glory against us. For, as an excellent person says in this case,' (here quoting Ostervald,) 'the baptismal engagement is a personal thing, in which every body should act for himself. When children are baptized, they know nothing of what is done to them. It is therefore ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY that, when they come to years of reason, they should become members of the church out of knowledge and choice. This is no novelty, innovation, or unnecessary solemnity, as some call every thing which does not agree with the custom of their country or church; but it is an imitation of the ancient and apostolick order, and an establishment altogether suited to the nature of the Christian religion.'

So fully and so candidly do these eminent dissenters avow their conviction of the inspired origin and necessity of the rite in question; so earnestly do they recommend its revived observance, or continued practice. It should cause all separatists to pause in their unauthorized career. It should dispose them to prefer the old paths to the new, that they may cease to trample upon a divine institution, and gladly avail themselves of the additional mean of grace we have the happiness to enjoy. In what manner, you may discover by a reference to the book of common prayer, in which the ceremony commences with an exposition of the following import: 'To the end that confirmation may be ministered to the more edifying of such as shall receive it, the church hath thought good to order, that none shall be confirmed but such as can say the



creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments; and can also answer to such other questions, as in the short catechism are contained; Which order is very convenient to be observed; to the end that children, being now come to years of discretion, and having learned what their god-fathers and godmothers promised for them in baptism, may themselves, with their own mouth and consent, openly before the church ratify and confirm the same; and also promise that, by the grace of God, they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things as they, by their own confession, have assented unto.'

Confirmation, in her judgment, is therefore properly administered to all baptized persons, who have attained an adequate knowledge of the elementary principles of their religion, and are so fully convinced of the necessity of making them the practical rule of their lives and conversation, as publickly to re-enact those baptismal vows, wherein they had before, either by themselves or by their sureties, 'renounced the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh;' wherein they had declared their assent to 'all the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the apostles' creed;' and solemnly covenanted, by the divine assistance, to 'keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life.'

The language of the exposition is indeed more immediately applicable to such as were baptized in infancy. But this has probably resulted from the desire of excluding candidates, until they have arrived at a suitable age, and does by no means militate with the confirming of persons, who, from prejudice or gross misapprehension, were suffered to remain destitute of this supplementary sign and seal of an inward and spiritual grace, during the period of their minority. For the bishop invariably inquires, 'Do ye here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that ye made, or that was made in your name, at your baptism; ratifying and confirming the same; and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which ye then under-

took, or your sponsors then undertook for you?' So that there is no exception. In the opinion of the church, all persons that have been baptized should be confirmed.

Before, however, the ceremony can be rightly entertained, the recipients must possess the requisite qualifications, and these are, 'repentance whereby they forsake sin; and faith whereby they steadfastly believe in the promises of God.' Of all which they are seriously reminded in the exposition and question already rehearsed, when, upon an affirmative answer, the act of confirmation succeeds; the bishop craves the blessing of Almighty God, with the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost; and, while each candidate is prostrate upon his knees, imposes hands upon his head, and pronounces the affecting benediction: 'Defend, O Lord, this thy child, (or, this thy servant,) with thy heavenly grace; that he may continue thine forever, and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto thy everlasting kingdom.' After which, other prayers ensue, whose general purport it is to implore such continued vouchsafements of divine aid and favour, as may enable the confirmed to lead the residue of their lives according to the profession then made; a profession that bespeaks their anxiety to be found in the paths of obedience, and that is also preparatory to their admission to the supper of the Lord.

Not, however, that every individual, who makes it, necessarily becomes a communicant; because there are many who still consider themselves unprepared for that holy mystery; and there are others, whose after conduct so wretchedly belies their most solemn protestations, as to render this blessed consummation of their Christian calling altogether inexpedient and improper. Neither, on the other hand, is it absolutely required previous to the reception of the sacrament. For if you examine the rubrick at the termination of the service, it is there provided, that 'none be admitted to the holy communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed.' The latter clause being added on account of the infrequency, and sometimes the entire absence, of episcopal visitations, when all godly and piously disposed persons, who intend

to avail themselves of the introductory rite, at the earliest opportunity, are readily received, and allowed to partake of the symbolized body and blood of Christ.

The invitation given by us to feed upon these sacred mysteries is indeed most free and comprehensive. It is like that recorded in the scriptures: 'Come, for all things are now ready.' All hearers are exhorted to consider 'the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof; and so to search and examine' their 'consciences, that' they 'may come holy and clean to such an heavenly feast in the marriage garment required by God in holy scripture.' They are publicly addressed in these solemn words, 'Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort.' They are also encouraged, in case of self-condemning apprehensions, to open their grief to the minister of God's word, that they 'may receive such godly counsel and advice, as may tend to the quieting of' their 'conscience, and the removing of all scruple and doubtfulness.'

But then, after these invitations, warnings, and encouragements, we leave them to determine their duty between themselves and their God. We erect no tribunal, from among their brethren of the laity, for the purpose of severely scrutinizing their hearts, of sitting in judgment upon the secret operations of God's Holy Spirit, and deciding the extent of his progress in each individual, through the medium of questions and answers, and by the passage of a final vote of admission or rejection. We think that a jurisdiction of this inquisitorial character is contrary to the example of the apostles, who never appear to have consulted their previous converts as to the propriety of receiving any individuals into the Christian church. We think it directly opposed to the inspired command, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged;' and are content to refer these things to those whose office it is to administer the sacraments of the gospel, constantly inviting the penitent and faithful to their reception, and only repulsing such as are 'open and notorious evil livers.'

Yes, brethren, these are the principles, and this is the practice of the church. We require the professions made at the baptismal font, prior to admission at the holy communion, and, with the explanation I have given, the subsequent rite of confirmation. But these preparatory steps are burdened by no judicial process and investigation on the part of laicks. Against all such interference we solemnly protest, and are happy in the belief, that our views are substantially maintained, by some of the great pillars of the dissenting churches.

I shall here present you with the sentiments of a no less distinguished divine of the presbyterian sect, than Dr. Mason, formerly of New York. 'God hath reserved to himself the prerogative of exploring secret motives: I, Jehovah, search the heart, and try the reins. And it is a source of ineffable consolation, that none but himself can try them. The obstruction of the creature is completely barred out by his own unchangeable constitution. I bless him for it. I had rather perish than have my heart searched by men or angels; and I put them all at defiance to declare what passes in my breast any further than I myself inform them by my own act. Whoever, therefore, maintains that the reality of conversion is the reason of admission to Christian privileges, lays down a rule that can never be applied. There are none who furnish more conclusive evidence of its nullity, than those who most warmly contend for it. A single observation will put this in a strong light. They who, without the aid of revelation, either from myself or my Creator, can read my hidden thoughts on one occasion, can read them on any other. Therefore, if they can ascertain sincerity in religion, they can equally ascertain it in their civil transactions; and consequently would never be imposed upon. But to such lengths they do not pretend to go; that is, they proclaim the falsity of their own doctrine and the futility of their own rule. How dare they, who cannot detect a perjury in the custom house, or a lie in the shop, represent themselves as able to detect hypocrisy in religious professions? It is foolish conceit, it is contemptible quackery. Take notice how they use their own rule. They get a man to recount

his experience. If satisfied with that, they set him down as converted. You see, that for the facts on which they build their judgment, they have all his own word; and yet they talk of ascertaining his state! Two plain questions on this head, and we shall leave them. If their man should say nothing at all, how would they find out his state? If he should happen to amuse them with a tale of experience, such as they approved and he never felt, where is their knowledge of his state? As for those who undertake to discern spirits, without producing their authority from the Father of spirits, under his broad seal of miracles, nothing is so amazing about them as their effrontery. All sober men should eschew them as jugglers and impostors. An astrologer who casts nativities from the aspects of the planets, or a strolling gipsy who predicts the history of life from the palm of a child's hand, is as worthy of credence as they.'

After this long extract, sound in principle and powerful in expression, there is no necessity of my appending a single observation in support of the practice prevailing in our primitive church. Its mode of admission to the table of the Lord is in perfect unison with the scriptures, and is alike admirably adapted to check the presumption of the fanatick, and to repress the operations of a self-righteous and censorious spirit.

In drawing to a conclusion, brethren, allow me to remark to you, that, throughout the confirmation service, there is evidently displayed the same devotional fervour and unaffected humility, which pervade every part of our beautiful liturgy, and that almost force upon the worshipper corresponding sentiments of piety and self-abasement. There is, also, a manifest propriety in renewing our baptismal engagements, especially if entered into during the unconscious hours of infancy, which strongly recommends the universal reception of the rite itself, as eminently calculated to impress the young with a lasting sense of the importance of religion, and of the imperious obligation of submitting in spirit and in truth to all the ordinances of our blessed Lord and Master, whether originating in his own, or in the, ministry of his chosen apostles.



I have, indeed, sometimes thought of confirmation, that it might have been anticipated in those memorable words of Christ: 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Certain it is, that those confirmed by Peter, and John, and Paul, are represented to have been first baptized, or born of water, and afterwards to have received or to have been born of the Holy Ghost, at the laying on of the apostles' hands. Certain it is, that Paul hath made an obvious distinction between 'the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;' and it is far from impossible, but that confirmation may be implied in the latter phrase, as well as water baptism in the former; it is far from impossible, but that the unconsciously baptized infant may be only born of water, while it is reserved for the confirmed adult, worthily embracing the ordinance, to be born of the Spirit. Of the Ephesians converted in mature years, it is written in relation to their spiritual union with Christ, 'In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed,' and belief we know was immediately followed by baptism, 'ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.' Wherein the word 'sealed,' in the opinion of the ancient fathers, conveyed alike the idea of the outward sign of laying hands upon the head, and of the inward grace impressed upon the heart.

In favour of the present suggestion, there is besides the declaration of Peter, 'Repent, and be BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the GIFT of the Holy Ghost.' There is this affirmation of John the Baptist: 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' There is the well known fact, that the apostles, who had partaken of this baptism, were directed by the risen Saviour, 'that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard from me.' And then succeeds the explanation: 'For John truly baptized

with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence ;' evidently referring to the miraculous effusion of the Spirit upon them, on the day of pentecost. There is, finally, the extraordinary spectacle exhibited at the baptism of our Lord ; 'Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water ; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him.'

In hazarding the preceding opinion, as having occasionally crossed my mind, I am, therefore, far from being unsustained by the language of scripture. It is, indeed, the most probable judgment that can be formed of the passages recited. The longer we reflect upon them, the deeper will the conviction be impressed upon our understandings, and the greater our confidence, that doctrines are often boldly maintained upon much more equivocal premises. But whether correct or incorrect, I know to a certainty, that confirmation, or the laying on of hands upon private Christians, is distinctly set forth in three several passages of holy writ, and that it was fully acceded to and practised by the spiritual fathers of the primitive church. I know that wherever it is enjoyed, it obviates much of the clamour against infant baptism, arising from the absence of the supposed prerequisites ; inasmuch as infants, when arrived at maturity, can, at the time of its reception, take upon themselves those promises of faith, repentance, and obedience, which were made in their name by the believing sponsors, who brought them to Christ. I know that it is in itself an ordinance most appropriate, impressive, and solemn, and that whoever partakes of it, with a glad heart, a willing and understanding mind, is thereby 'sealed by the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption.'

More than this I need not urge. It is sufficient to justify our church, for her continued observance, in common with an immense majority of believers, of a pious, venerable, and apostolick institution. The question, indeed, very naturally occurs, whether by this course she does not afford a stricter example of obedience to the oracles

of God, than those various orders of sectarians, who have combined to lay it aside, as a thing of nought? The question very naturally occurs, and the answer cannot be mistaken; although it is, perhaps, better to waive a more explicit reply, lest, in asserting the greater purity of our revered Zion, I should be thought to criminate the motives, as well as the practice of our fellow Christians; when He, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, well knows, that had I the mantle of Elijah, I would gladly convert it into a robe of charity, and extend its shadow to the four corners of the earth; there being much to esteem, and much to love, among our brethren of other folds.

And yet, so long as it is apparent in the nature of things, that the Most High God must be more pleased with sincerity in the way of truth, than with sincerity in that of error; so long it is our duty to hold fast to the altar, the worship, the ministry of our protestant episcopal church; and so long should it be our pleasure to conform ourselves, with reverent submission, to all the pious usages and institutions, which have been perpetuated within her sanctuary from the very period when they were first established, by the inspired wisdom and authority of the holy apostles.

It is in this manner, that we shall outwardly exhibit to the world our attachment to the injunctions of our divine Lord and Master. It is in this manner, that the unconfirmed, if they possess a true and lively faith in the efficacy of his redemption, will embrace the earliest opportunity of repairing to his authorized ambassadors, and, like the converts of Samaria, and the disciples of Ephesus, reap the spiritual benefits attending the imposition of their hands, even those blessed gifts of the Spirit, which were once known to have accompanied the ceremony, as it is written, ‘Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.’ **AMEN.**

## SERMON X.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth*

IF there are any persons upon the face of the globe, calling themselves Christians, who profess to discard the assembling of themselves together, for the avowed object of worshipping the Lord God of their fathers, if there are any such persons, I am ignorant of their existence. I know not the sect to which they belong. Their numbers must be too insignificant to require a passing notice from the most zealous defenders of our formularies of publick worship.

Infidels are in this respect the only opposers, the sole deriders, of a species of devotion commended to every man's conscience by the authentick words of scripture, and to the propriety of whose observance, both Jews and Christians have from the earliest times united in bearing their decided testimony. Here, with the true followers of the Lamb, there is no diversity of sentiment. All concur in advocating the publick worship of God. All esteem it one of the most essential features of a religious life. All, who recognise the holy sabbath as a divine institution, devote some portion of its sacred hours, openly and avowedly, to the reasonable service of their Great Creator and Almighty Friend.

They differ, indeed, as to the mode of conducting the ceremony. Unhappily for the peace and prosperity of Zion, they agree not as to the posture of the body during its performance, whether it should be bowed down or erect; nor as to the spiritual part, whether it should be with precomposed or with extemporary prayers. It is even too true to be seriously denied, that there is scarcely an epithet of derision, or of reproach, which has not been

liberally applied to all those publick forms and ceremonies, which have for ages prevailed in the church, as peculiarly appropriate in the expression of human homage and human dependence. I will not repeat one from the long and disgraceful catalogue. They must be familiar to your recollection, and have doubtless proved among the most successful weapons, which have been brandished against us, by the art and subtlety of man's device. I prefer a more calm and dispassionate investigation, than would be likely to result from the refutation of coarse invective, and, must I say it, of the grossest ribaldry. I prefer, with the scriptures in my hand, with reason in my mouth, and the temper becoming the minister of the lowly Jesus in my heart; I prefer with these, to defend and vindicate all the usages of our much injured church, in her house of prayer and praise.

To begin with the subject of least comparative importance; I fear that many zealous religionists have not hesitated to condemn every organized mode of bodily worship, or, at best, that they have so simplified and cramped exterior reverence, that the bare powers of vision would often fail to instruct us, as to the precise nature of their assemblies, whether they were collected together as listeners or as worshippers. But that any thing, wearing the semblance of indifference, should take place in outward devotion, reason itself combines with the voice of scripture, and proclaims its impropriety upon the clearest and most satisfactory grounds.

We are, certainly, as much indebted to the goodness of God for the formation of the body, as for that of the soul, and they are equally and inseparably connected, in the obligations resulting from the continued preservation of life and happiness. Ought there not, then, to be a united expression of gratitude and adoration; an expression as visible to the eye, as audible to the ear? Shall the body receive good at the hand of the Lord, shall it be fed, and clothed, and sustained in sickness and in health, and still refer the solemn act of returning homage to the soul alone? Forbid it, nature, whose sympathies, pervading untaught the bosom of her meanest children, invariably produce



some external mark and gesture of humility towards the object of their prevailing hopes and fears. Forbid it, civilized society, whose constant solicitude it is, to render significant tokens of honour, in the presence of those, whom either the endowments of the mind, or the virtues of the heart; whom even the fortune of arms, the glitter of wealth, or the pomp and circumstance of office have enabled to reach an elevated rank, in the scale of being. And shall we not, with these things perpetually occurring before our eyes, freely admit that the Creator of the universe, in whom the body lives, and moves, and has its being, possesses some substantial claims upon its pious reverence? Shall we not cheerfully concede, that it is very meet, and right, and our bounden duty, in our intercourse with his sacred courts, to adopt such corporeal postures, as will clearly evince our solemn belief of his own inspired annunciation, 'Here will I dwell?'

Surely, brethren, it is a conduct so natural and becoming, so strikingly expedient and praiseworthy, that I am lost in astonishment, whenever I reflect that the external religious ceremonies of our church were among the moles and eyesores most bitterly inveighed against, in the days of puritanical schism and intolerance. We are too frail in our natures, too wayward in our fancies, to rely entirely upon the good desires and dispositions of the soul, and consequently publick worship, to be celebrated in the beauty of holiness, requires all the extrinsick aid within the compass of our ability to employ.

Accordingly, we find that all the holy men of God, whose praise is in the scriptures, ever resorted to some devotional attitudes or other, as useful auxiliaries to the spirit, in offering up the sacrifices of prayer and praise. The spreading forth of the hands unto the Lord in the heavens, was observed by Moses, after one of his interviews with the prevaricating Pharaoh; by David, when his soul was famished in a dry and thirsty land; and by the wisest of men, when, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, he dedicated the temple, which was filled with the excellent glory. The prostration of the body, or falling upon the face, was also practised by the Jewish

lawgiver, when, for the space 'of forty days and forty nights,' he 'did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of the sins' of the people, and by the holy Job, when informed of the loss of his substance, and the untimely death of his children. For he 'arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said,' 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

Nor, in this enumeration, let me fail to remind you, that genuflection, or the bending of the knee, a position so humbly adopted by the church, is amply supported in sacred writ, by the authority of the psalmist, who, exhorting all the people to the worship of God, exclaimed, 'O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.' By the authority of Daniel, who regularly 'kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed.' By the authority of the proto-martyr Stephen; for, commending his spirit to the Lord Jesus, and imploring the pardon of his murderers, 'he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' By the authority of Peter and Paul, who severally 'kneeled down and prayed;' the one, when reanimating the corpse of the much lamented Tabitha, and the other, when bidding a last affectionate adieu to those weeping elders of Ephesus, who were to 'see his face no more.' By the authority of the blessed Saviour of sinners himself, who, in the garden of Gethsemane, when his soul was 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,' according to St. Luke, 'kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.'

Thus, then, the holy scriptures present us with the most unexceptionable testimony in favour of external worship, without recurring to the rites and ceremonies enjoined upon the Jewish church. All the holy men that I have instanced, together with their Master, in the most interesting situations that can be imagined, neglected not to precede their addresses to the throne of grace, with a corresponding corporeal act of devotion. If their wants were ever so urgent, if their danger ever so imminent,

still, before presuming to implore the interference of heaven, they spread abroad the hands; they fell upon the face; they kneeled.

Let it not, therefore, be thought beneath the dignity of Christians to follow their example. Let it not be doubted, but that such expressive demonstrations have a powerful influence in promoting intense and fervent supplication and prayer. If the structure of our edifices be such, as to make it inconvenient to fall upon the face, we can yet fall upon our knees, when we are, or ought to be, confessing our sins; when we are interceding for their pardon, and invoking all those mercies and blessings, which we are emboldened to seek for, in the name, and through the merits and mediation of our Saviour Christ. A sitting posture is certainly less becoming and reverent. I know, indeed, that David is once represented to have 'sat before the Lord,' and prayed, and that Nehemiah 'sat down, and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.' But before these examples can be fairly cited as justifying precedents in our day, we should at least be sure, that they have been maturely weighed and conscientiously adopted. For otherwise, and unless some infirmity of the body supervenes, sedentary prayer can scarcely prove acceptable to God, scarcely prove a sacrifice, in which he shall be well pleased, and ready and willing to answer from heaven his dwelling place.

Similar remarks apply to the erect posture, extremely appropriate in praise, where the spirit of a man should be elevated, ardent, and sublime. It was the sole devotional employment of Adam in the days of his innocence, and was doubtless uttered in a manner which evinced that there was no fear in love. Wherefore, in magnifying the Lord Most High, for the inestimable gift of the second Adam, we may, with singular propriety, lift up our bodies with those emotions of perfect love, which cast out fear, and pronounce the praises of redeeming love, in an attitude suited to the rapture and rejoicing of our souls. But in prayer, there is something in the bended knee more characteristic of those feelings of reverence and humility, of

dependence and submission, of sorrow and contrition for sin, which ought fully to pervade the heart, in our applications for divine mercy and protection.

The scriptures are certainly greatly in its favour, and it may not be too much to assert, that no one single instance can be produced, where an erect position was maintained throughout publick prayer. The case of 'the publican standing afar off,' and who 'smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner,' is not in point, the act being private, and the prayer itself ejaculatory. The case of Phinehas, and that of the seed of Israel, mentioned in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah, with a few others, are all susceptible of a construction comporting with our views, and fully sustained by the authority of the inspired volume. For if we examine the account given of the consecration of the temple in the first book of Kings, it is indeed said, that 'Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord,' and 'all the congregation of Israel stood;' but, then, this was only while he was pronouncing a blessing upon them, it being afterwards added, 'that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from KNEELING ON HIS KNEES with his hands spread up to heaven. And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice.'

There is, besides, in the second book of Chronicles, a relation of the same transaction recorded in this manner: 'And he stood before the altar of the Lord, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands, (for Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and upon it he stood, and KNEELED DOWN UPON HIS KNEES before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:') So that this parallel passage clearly indicates, that the standing up, spoken of in Kings, was merely preserved while blessing the people; that it was either preparatory or subsequent to the more humble act of bowing down. It also clearly indicates, that we may give a similar interpretation to the expression in Nehemiah, 'The seed

of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers ;' particularly, when it is said, in the preceding chapter, ' Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God : and all the people answered, amen, amen, with lifting up their hands ; and they BOWED their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their FACES TO THE GROUND.'

Recollect, moreover, brethren, the strong and emphatick declaration of God himself : ' As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' Recollect, that St. Paul uses this very expression, as synonymous with the lifting up of his voice in prayer : ' For this cause I BOW DOWN MY KNEES unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' Recollect, that when the disciples of Tyre, with their wives and children, accompanied Paul and his companions out of the city, they all ' kneeled down, and prayed.' Recollect, above all, that our blessed Saviour says, ' When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray STANDING in the SYNAGOGUES, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be SEEN of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.'

These surely are passages of some moment ; and such as will not follow, nor be led by them, might, at least, pursue another course, without affecting to look down with contempt upon our more scriptural practice, our alternate rising up to praise the Lord, and bowing down to supplicate the blessings of his providence and grace. They accuse us of formality, of an exceeding fondness for ceremony and show. I will not retort the charges. They are unworthy of those that wear the livery of Christ. I will not even pretend that an upright posture is incompatible with ' the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man.' I rather believe the reverse, and that this deviation from holy examples is by no means a fatal error. But at the same time, that it is generally, if not utterly, at variance with the scriptures, has been sufficiently proved. After



diligent examination, according to my understanding, with the exception of the hypocrites referred to and rebuked by our Saviour, I have not been able to discover a solitary undisputed example of standing up, during the celebration of publick prayer. Kneeling, on the contrary, is every where to be met with. In allusion to this, Isaiah says, 'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees;' The psalmist, 'My knees are weak through fasting;' The apostle Paul, 'Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;' The Lord Jehovah, in Ezekiel, 'All hands shall be feeble, and all knees weak.'

How much cause have we, therefore, brethren, to adhere strictly to this good old custom, originally established by the will of God, and piously retained in the Christian church, from the period of its foundation by Christ and his apostles; a custom most likely to prevent the wandering of the sight, and to suppress the roving of the thoughts. For when the whole person is exposed, and each individual assumes an attitude comporting with his own feelings; Is there not danger, lest the attention should be attracted to outward objects, to the entrance of such as either designedly or unavoidably delay their attendance, to the various circumstances of dress and parade, of concern and unconcern, of propriety and impropriety, which serve to distinguish the appearance and deportment of others? Alas! I fear we must all of us be free to acknowledge, that such danger is not so idle and visionary, as to require no antidote. We must all of us feel, that indecorum is not so seldom existing in our worshipping assemblies, as even to neutralize the necessity of guarding against it, as efficiently as possible.

Why, then, should not Christians universally adopt the preventive counsels and practice of our holy church? Especially, since there is obviously more of humility than of pride in the pliant, bended knee; more of composure and self-possession in the hidden and retired, than in the devious, rambling eye. God only knows. We must not judge, lest we be judged. We must leave every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and confine ourselves

to the prayer, that whatever this persuasion be, it may contribute to accomplish the hearty desire of Paul, where he says, ‘I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.’

There are, however, some other ceremonies observed in our publick worship, which have for ages incurred the censure of our fellow Christians. My limits will compel me to notice them but briefly, although I trust that the explanation and defence will be as satisfactory as brief. In repeating the apostles’ creed, it is objected that we are accustomed to bow, at the moment we express our belief in Jesus Christ our Lord. For what good reason, I have never been able to divine. His Father says, ‘Let all the angels of God worship him ;’ and again, ‘Unto the Son, he saith, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.’ He was worshipped, by the apostle ‘Thomas, in the unqualified terms, ‘My Lord and my God.’ The great body of Christians do not hesitate to pay to him divine honours, and why this small tribute of our love and reverence should be denounced is most extraordinary. I can attribute it to nothing but an unreasonable prejudice, or to a captious dislike of every thing practised in the Roman church. For me, it is enough, that the apostle hath said, ‘At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’ Bowing and confessing would therefore seem to be most appropriately blended together, in this part of our service, and long may we, in this manner, manifest our submission to an authority that no man can justly condemn.

Another objection is urged against our kneeling, when we receive the elements of bread and wine, in the sacrament of the Lord’s supper. But the answer is similar, and equally pertinent. Those elements are administered and received with the use of these solemn words, slightly and from necessity altered from the original ; ‘the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee ;’ and ‘the

blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee.' Who, then, shall refuse to bow at that blessed name? Who that is 'not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table,' O most merciful Lord, shall venture to brand our lowly posture with the semblance of idolatry? Let us pity, brethren, the weakness of such persons. Let us forgive the uncharitableness of their imputation. But never, no never let us follow their example, by feeding upon those holy mysteries, sitting at our ease, and scorning the more humble and reverent attitude. A very accurate writer has remarked, 'that the posture of sitting was first brought into the church by the Arians; who stubbornly denying the divinity of our Saviour, thought it no robbery to be equal with him, and to sit down with him at his table.' From the same author, I also learn that 'the pope' 'always receives this sacrament sitting.' So that in one particular, if no more, our seceding protestant brethren must refrain from the cry of superstition and popery; they, who prefer to copy after the solitary example of his holiness, 'rather than not differ from the best and purest church in the world.'

The use of the organ is another serious and insurmountable objection to the publick worship of the church. David, the man after God's own heart, in the temple service, could listen to the ten-stringed instruments and other harps of solemn sound; and could compose hymns to be accompanied by their melody. The Almighty himself could then endure instrumental, as well as vocal, musick. He could tolerate the lyre, the sackbut, and the psaltery; the timbrel, the trumpet, and the organ, in his house of prayer. But many of our modern Christian brethren are fain to think that a change has ensued in him, 'with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' and that what was once pleasing and acceptable, has ceased to be gratifying, to the divine ear.

Not that they can produce the slightest evidence in favour of their opinion; not that our Saviour drove away the musicians, with the moneychangers from the temple at Jerusalem; not that there is one word from him, from the apostles, or primitive Christians, authorizing them to

proclaim war against instruments of musick in our churches. No, no such thing: They can discover no such valid pleas against them. It is simply because the catholics continue their use, that they persist in banishing their melody from the house of God. In vain did this gracious Being admit them in his solemn worship. In vain are they told by St. John, in the Apocalypse, 'I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.' Not the divine appointment, not the practice of high heaven itself can control the prejudices of some of our dissenting brethren. They will neither with the organ praise the Lord themselves, nor can they find it in their hearts to think or to speak charitably of those who do. We must suffer them to act their own pleasure. For ourselves, we cannot but know, that the organ has a most valuable and solemn effect, whenever we are here 'speaking to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord.'

The only remaining objection, to which I shall direct your attention, arises from the wearing of distinguishing garments by the clergy of the church, during the celebration of divine service. And surely nothing but a most inveterate habit of discerning motes and beams in the eyes of others, could have furnished our opposers with the shadow of a reason against a practice so becoming in itself, and so fully sanctioned by the volume of inspiration. They cannot have forgotten what minute directions were given to Moses, in relation to the vestments to be worn by the Jewish priests: 'And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle.' The succeeding details are too voluminous to repeat; but the dresses for the high priest, priests, and levites are all de-

scribed with the utmost minuteness, and evince beyond all doubt, that the Almighty is very far from disapproving the modest and appropriate attire, in which the ministers of his church are at present clothed.

The surplice, in particular, cannot be offensive to Him, who is represented by Daniel, as habited in a 'garment white as snow;' nor to our Saviour, whose 'raiment,' at the transfiguration, 'was white as the light.' In the Revelation, it is also apparent, that the church herself is to be hereafter adorned with the same apparel; 'let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine white linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'

To be perpetually upbraiding her ministers for putting on the like simple and beautiful garments, betrays, therefore, but little respect for the wisdom of the heavenly bridegroom. It is reviling what God hath honoured, and his beloved Son approved. Addressing the angel of one of the seven churches of Asia, he says, 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess him before my Father, and before his angels.' And with such authority, such ample promises of reward to the faithful, the ministers of Christ need not care to bear the obloquy of men. The divine countenance is all sufficient to extract the sting, and blunt the edge, of their foulest calumnies.

'What offence,' said Jerome, 'what offence can it be to God for a bishop or priest, &c. to proceed to the communion in a white garment?' An interrogatory that clearly shows the custom of the primitive church, and that should cause a blush to mantle the cheeks of those, who, in declaiming against the external worship, the rites, ceremonies, and habiliments of our Zion, appear to be entirely ignorant of the fact, that they are alike opposing the institutions of God, the will of Christ, the judgment of his



apostles, and the faith and practice of the primitive church.

I would not, indeed, set too high a value on the outward appearance, knowing that the Lord looketh on the heart, and thence determines the true character of every man's work, whether it be good or whether it be evil. But if the subjects discussed, and the usages defended in this discourse are altogether useless and unimportant; if corporeal worship and the mode of its performance cannot possibly become an acceptable sacrifice in the sight of heaven; Why was it, in one of the conflicts attending the journey through the wilderness; why was it, 'when Moses,' in a supplicating posture, 'held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed?' Why was it, when his imploring 'hands were heavy,' that Aaron and Hur 'took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword?'

These, brethren, are the words of scripture; they were written for our instruction, and if I am capable of comprehending their import, they do most indubitably prove, that the Almighty is to be obeyed in all things, however trivial and insignificant they may appear in the eyes of erring man; that he even suspends his blessings upon the external features of that obedience; and, in the present instance, only bestowed them, where bestowment was sought after, in the way of his appointment. Permit me also to remark, that the whole transaction is far more open to the shafts of raillery, than any observances upon which I have this day insisted, as divinely ordained. And still, it was the counsel and the work of God, still shall no cunningly devised ridicule convince me, that the armies of Israel would have prevailed over those of Amalek, had not Moses, and Aaron, and Hur discharged their duty, precisely as it was discharged.

The case of Naaman, the Syrian, is not less decidedly to the purpose. Directed by the prophet, for his cure, to

'go and wash in Jordan seven times,' he 'was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?' But if he had not happily returned to a better mind, if he had not 'dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God,' never would his flesh have 'come again like unto the flesh of a little child;' never would he have become 'clean.'

It is from such passages that I obtain the principles which regulate my conduct in relation to the church of Christ. Show me what God hath established, and my faith is secured, my obedience is compelled. There is a voice from heaven ever whispering to my heart the doctrine it once sounded aloud in the ears of Peter, 'What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.' And these are sentiments, which I wish to inculcate upon the minds of all. Wit and ridicule have no place in my creed. They are entirely irrelevant, when sported upon heavenly things. Let those who differ in opinion from us; let those who are prejudiced against our peculiar ceremonies, substitute argument for satire, and testimony for assertion; let them prove that they have proceeded from a corrupt source, and not from the unerring counsels of heaven; let them do this, and I will be as ready to adopt their system, as I am now zealous in maintaining what is conscientiously believed to be the truth divulged in holy oracles.

In the mean time, I shall go on my way rejoicing in the conviction, that our church only requires to be generally known, in order to be generally embraced; and that the more her peculiarities are investigated, the more certainly it will appear that she has her foundation upon the Rock of Ages. The morning of the next sabbath will be devoted to the subject of publick forms of prayer; and although I am sensible of the injurious light in which they are too often regarded, I shall proceed with the utmost confidence in maintaining their intrinsic value

and scriptural origin. And may Almighty God, in the abundance of his goodness, grant me wisdom to examine, with power and effect, one of the most interesting features of our spiritual economy. May he enable me to contend successfully, as well as earnestly, for the faith once delivered to the saints; and to him the Father, with the Son and Holy Ghost, shall be ascribed everlasting praises, world without end. AMEN.

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## SERMON XI.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

IN my last discourse, I attempted to vindicate the mode of conducting the visible publick worship of the church, and flatter myself with the hope that you must have perceived how admirably and how faithfully it coincides with the injunctions and examples exhibited in the scriptures. With many persons, all these observances are regarded with the utmost contempt, not to say abhorrence. They revile them for what they ignorantly term their papal origin, and fondly imagine their own to be a far more simple and devout method of approaching the throne of grace, and paying their homage to the great Jehovah. Before the kings of this earth, the knee may be bent, but not before the King of kings and Lord of lords. It would be too formal, perhaps too servile and obsequious. It would savour too much of those objects, who fawn upon the persons of princes, and little coalesce with our sternly inflexible republican principles.

But embrace, brethren, what doctrines you please in

relation to this world and its political institutions, they must not come in competition with the higher concerns of religion. God will still continue to be King in Zion, and Lord of All; 'his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.' In his presence, every high look should be cast down, and every stubborn knee be bent. It is more reverent, more humble, more expressive of the infinite disparity subsisting between the august Creator, and the poor worms of the dust, who feed upon his bounty, who respire the vital fluid, and enjoy all the good things of this life, by his permission alone.

I freely concede that external ceremonies are not to be compared with the lifting up of the heart unto God in the heavens. I know that our Saviour severely rebuked those pharisees who paid tithes of all that they possessed, even of 'mint, and rue, and all manner of herbs.' But recollect the cause. It was not, as some people would adroitly argue; it was not, that he condemned the extreme rigour with which they complied with the letter of the law. It was because they did not at the same time catch its spirit. It was because they exhausted all their obedience in the minor duty, and 'passed over judgment and the love of God;' passed over 'the weightier matters,' and rigidly observed the lighter; when, in his estimate of religious obligation, there should have been no omission of either; when, to use his own emphatick language, 'these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.' Language, that as broadly condemns the modern despiser, as it once did the ancient observer, of little things. I am, therefore, for that golden mean, that truly safe and Christian course, which ventures not, on any pretence whatever, to set aside a single ceremony, institution, precept, or doctrine, which the divine wisdom hath ordained. I am for both outward and inward devotion. I am for cultivating the latter, in the precise dress and manner in which the former was originally clothed and approved of heaven. When I come to appear before thee, O God, in the congregation of the righteous, may my knees be as prone, as my heart should be humble; may my prayers be the same

with that beautiful and solemn liturgy, which has for ages survived the scorn of the scorner, and extorted the admiration of the wise and good.

With respect to prayer, it is indeed most astonishing, that a contrary practice was ever suffered to prevail among those who call themselves, and many of whom doubtless are, the sincere disciples of Jesus. It is at variance with all scripture, with the counsels of Him who heareth prayer, with the precedents furnished for our imitation by the prophets and the Jewish church, by our blessed Saviour, the apostles, and primitive Christians. For publick extemporary prayer in the house of God, I do not scruple to affirm, that there is not one syllable in justification, from Genesis to Revelation. It is altogether of recent origin, and of human device. It is among that infinitely vast variety of new projects and new doctrines, which have come to light since the volume of inspiration has been closed, which have neither prophecy nor miracle to enforce their claim upon our observance, and that, however conformable to human prejudice, will not for a single moment endure the test of truth and reason.

For what is the language of truth, of almighty truth itself? 'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.' Does this look like unpremeditated extemporaneous prayer? Does it sanction the clothing of those thoughts with unselected words, which rise up unadvisedly in the mind, which are the offspring of the moment, and are often known to convey ideas and principles, as unfit for God to hear, as for man to utter? Certainly, brethren, if there be such an error, as being rash with the mouth and hasty with the heart in uttering any thing before this majestick Being, it must be found among those who disdain to resort to written forms; who boldly pronounce our book of common prayer a dead letter, entirely bereft of the life and soul of devotion; who are never too busily engaged in the cares of this world, or discomposed through human passion or human frailty, but that they can rush at a moment's warning into the dread presence



of God, and pray as confidently, as if they had premeditated for hours, the most solemn performance, in which we are ever employed.

Not, however, to anticipate the remarks, which will hereafter become more appropriate; I design to examine, with all the brevity in my power, the testimony furnished by the scriptures in favour of our mode of conducting publick worship, in the use of precomposed forms of prayer. Did they really deserve the opprobrium, so frequently and so presumptuously cast upon them, it would seem very extraordinary, that the earliest act of publick devotion, commemorated by the inspired penman, should be of this description. I allude to the anthem celebrating the deliverance of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh, and commencing in this exulting strain: 'I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he has become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.' You will find the entire anthem in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. You will there find, that it was first sung by Moses and the male population of Israel, and that Miriam the prophetess, and all the women immediately went out, 'with timbrels and dances,' and 'answered them,' repeating the same words. Nothing, then, can be more evident than its precomposed character, that it was prepared beforehand for general use, and on this triumphant solemnity recited by the general voice.

Various other forms of devotion in the pentateuch also appear to have been divinely prescribed. I will instance but two of them. In the twenty-first chapter of Deuteronomy, a prayer is provided, to be used after the entrance into the promised land in the case of secret homicide. 'A heifer, which had not been wrought with, and which had not drawn in the yoke,' was to be first sacrificed, 'and the priests, the sons of Levi,' were to 'come near,' 'and all the elders of that city, next unto the slain man,' were to 'wash their hands over the heifer;' they were to 'answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have

our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge.' In the sixth chapter of Numbers, 'the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.'

Thus early, then, did the Almighty sanction the use of forms in publick worship; thus early enjoin them upon the observation of the people whom his own right hand had redeemed from the house of bondage. So far from being preferred, extemporaneous effusions are not so much as named, in that interesting period of Jewish history. All was form. All what is now perversely termed formality, and it was acceptable to God. It was pleasing and grateful to Him who is now but too commonly supposed to turn away with loathing and abhorrence from similar acts of prayer and praise. In the expiation for murder, it is said, that 'the blood shall be forgiven them.' After the benediction which he himself deigned to compose for Aaron and his sons, it is written, 'They shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.'

And how was it, brethren, in the time of David? Was publick worship then celebrated in the premeditated or the unpremeditated form? Let the bible answer, and you will learn that the Levites were directed 'to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even,' 'according to the order commanded unto them.' Let the entire hymns of prayer, as well as of praise, principally composed by the sweet psalmist of Israel, let them answer, and you will learn that they constituted a material part of the temple service. On one occasion, David delivered a particular 'psalm, to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren;' a psalm containing this petition, 'Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise;' and when it was repeated, 'all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord.'

Nor was this worship confined to that age alone. In the days of Hezekiah, and in the house of the Lord, 'the king, and all that were present with him, bowed themselves and worshipped. Moreover, Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of DAVID, and of Asaph the seer: and they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.' 'So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people.'

Long afterwards, at the erection of the second temple, a similar worship prevailed. In the book of Ezra, it is said, 'When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinances of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.'

And here let me reiterate the well known fact, that several of the psalms were composed in the language of prayer, and at the same time were offered up by all the congregation. In the eightieth, for example, we have this expression thrice repeated: 'Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.' In one instance, it is even followed by an invocation, that clearly shows its imploring character, and the union of priests and people in divine worship: 'O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?'

But lest a distinction should still be urged between psalms of praise and petitions for mercy and forgiveness, lest it should be said, that while the former were precomposed, the latter were unpremeditated; in addition to the examples already produced, I will refer you to the prophet Joel for a form of prayer, to be repeated in the temple, under these circumstances: 'Blow the trumpet in Zion,

sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly : Gather the people together, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts ; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet : Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and LET THEM SAY, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them.' After which it is added, 'Then will the Lord be jealous for his land and pity his people.' 'And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.'

I will refer you to Hosea, for a yet more explicit declaration in favour of forms of prayer, addressed to all the people : 'O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God ; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. TAKE WITH YOU WORDS, and turn to the Lord ; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously : so will we render the calves of our lips. Ashur shall not save us ; we will not ride upon horses ; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods : for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.' Yes, brethren, WORDS were to be taken, WORDS were actually given. And what were the blessings promised in return ? 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely : for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel : he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return ; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine : the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.'

How obvious, then, to every man unperverted by prejudice, that the Almighty hath no such objection to precomposed forms of prayer, as is vainly imagined in these latter days. From the bottom of my heart I wish that they, who on this account are perpetually calumniating the service of the church, could present us with numerous examples of publick extemporary prayer from the records of the old testament. The difference of worship between

us, so far as their authority was concerned, would then be circumscribed by the question of relative value or adaptation to the condition of man; it would cease to exhibit, on the one side, a flagrant departure from the original mode of serving God in his holy temple, and no longer prove a formidable obstacle to our being more closely united in the bonds of Christian fellowship and love. But alas! the thing is impossible: not one such example is to be found. Whoever publicly called upon the name of the Lord, in the Jewish church, was furnished with words communicated by inspiration from heaven. With these, he was to praise the Lord Most High; with these, invoke the throne of grace; with these, the incense of his soul, and the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit were to ascend up on high; and from their combined efficacy were to result all those benefits which the Almighty, in the boundless extent of his mercy and benevolence, bestowed upon his ancient and peculiar people.

Let it, however, be distinctly understood, that if our blessed Saviour, in the course of his ministry, had either condemned the customary service of the temple, or had instituted another mode of drawing near to God, with a clean heart in full assurance of faith; let it be distinctly understood, that this condemnation and this mode would not have been in the slightest degree affected by the previous forms of devotion prescribed to the Jewish nation. They would have been superseded, as circumcision was superseded by baptism, and the passover by the supper of the Lord.

But here, it is very material to be borne in mind, that our divine Redeemer never suffered one word of censure to escape his lips, in relation to precomposed prayers. At the period of his advent, it is universally admitted that the Jews possessed a national liturgy, and that it was repeated in the temple twice every day, at the celebration of the morning and evening sacrifice. And so far was this from being considered a desecration of the courts of the Lord's house, that 'when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished,' thither the virgin Mary repaired, with her first born son, the in-



fant Jesus, 'to offer a sacrifice, according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.' There, also, it was that Simeon 'came by the Spirit,' 'and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.' There it was that 'one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser,' and 'a widow of about fourscore and four years,' resided, and 'departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers, night and day.'

And can you believe, if that temple had been profaned by its liturgy, that the purification service would have been submitted to by the holy child Jesus, or that Simeon and Anna would have been so highly commended; the one, for being 'just and devout;' the other, for 'serving God with fastings and prayers?' Can you believe that the Holy Spirit would have either carried the good old Israelite there, or suffered the prophetess to remain, joining in and contaminated by the breath of unhallowed prayer? The idea is too absurd, too preposterous. All these events afford indisputable evidence that God was well pleased with the devotional forms there employed, and, if many of the priests and worshippers were 'in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,' that he could still address them in the language once appropriated to their forefathers, 'They have well said all that they have spoken. Oh that there were such a heart in them.'

But even on the supposition that these inferences are not as fully warranted as I am disposed to maintain; we all know, that when our Saviour had arrived at the years of maturity, and had commenced his ministry, he invariably frequented the Jewish synagogue; the synagogue, in which no man will venture to deny, that publick prayers were celebrated after a written form. For its liturgy is still in existence. It was read three times in the course of every day, and began in this manner: 'O God, let thy name be magnified and sanctified in the world, which thou hast created according to thy good pleasure. Let thy kingdom have dominion therein; let redemption flourish, and let the Messiah come speedily, that thy name may be glorified.'

How, then, if the contemners of our service are to be credited, and their mode is to be preferred, how are we to account for these frequent visits of Christ to the synagogue? Provided we are so cold and formal in our devotions, owing to their being previously prepared and understood, how, especially, are we to account for his neglect in not condemning a similar worship? He could readily reprove the Jews for every other offence. He could reckon up in order the long catalogue of their crimes; could call them hypocrites, whited sepulchres, and a generation of vipers; could, on observing their profanation, drive them out from his holy temple; but never, no never did he impute to them the slightest error for their constant daily use of publick forms of prayer. In his hearing, they were rehearsed in temple and in synagogue, but not one word betrayed his disapprobation. He never counselled his disciples against them. You have heard what he did say: 'Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues;' and how easy it would have been to have added, who love to use forms of prayer; but no such thing. He rather countenanced those forms by his presence, and is even supposed by many to have adopted them himself.

Nor is this opinion by any means improbable. For had he refused to participate in publick worship; had he appeared, when it was celebrated, without uniting his own with the devotions of others, how eagerly would his adversaries have seized upon this circumstance to render him odious with the people! how promptly have denounced him as an impious, prayerless sinner! But amid all the vile, detestable calunnies with which they were fain to blacken his reputation, this charge was never suggested; and, certainly, the profound silence of so many, and such implacable, accusers, upon a subject so important in itself, is no slight evidence of his having joined in the worship of both the synagogue and the temple.

Be this, however, as it may; he never objected to the written formularies observed in either. He never ascribed to them the inefficacy and want of spirituality, so loudly complained of, in our devotional exercises. He never told

them, in their lieu, to pray extemporaneously. So far from this, he did not hesitate to provide for his disciples a form of prayer, the most simple, beautiful, and comprehensive the world has ever seen. I need not repeat it. Of all the inspired writings, it is the most familiar to your ears. Long will it be recorded to the praise and glory of the church, that it preserves a conspicuous place in all her numerous offices of devotion. Encouraged, in using it, by the express command of its Author, she considers it as determining with unerring certainty the abstract question concerning liturgies. If they are inexpedient, if they are justly obnoxious to the charge of formality, so is the prayer drawn up and recommended by our Saviour Christ. He must either have erred in judgment, in yielding to the wishes of his followers, or he must have intentionally laid them under an obligation fatally calculated to impair, if not destroy, the fervency of their petitions to the mercy seat. How strange! how very strange! that the modern expedient never entered into his mind, that he never intimated to them the paramount value of extemporaneous addresses.

Had he deemed them advisable, I cannot conceive of a more suitable occasion, than that afforded in the garden of Gethsemane. Why, then, were they not recommended? Why were they not embraced by the three disciples, Peter, James, and John? In obedience to the command, 'Watch and pray,' they must at least have attempted the discharge of the duty, for to them the expression applies, 'The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' And yet, if they engaged in any other exercise than secret prayer, if the extemporaneous kind was adopted; How came it to pass that they all fell asleep? It was but a short time that their Master left them. He rebuked them, because they could not watch with him one hour. And was he only absent a part of that time? It is truly wonderful that all these disciples yielded to the influence of slumber; that even the one did not escape its contagion who, if the present theory be correct, must have lifted up his voice, and led in their common devotions. Hence I conclude that the practice of our separatists was then un-

known, and am again tempted to exclaim, How strange ! how very strange ! that the modern expedient never entered into the mind of Christ, that he never intimated to his chosen followers the paramount value of extemporaneous addresses.

But the subject is too solemn and sacred to venture upon the borders of irony. I will be very plain and candid. I will show, beyond the possibility of a reasonable doubt, that our blessed Saviour must have entertained very different views of publick unpremeditated prayer, from such as prevail among many of our dissenting brethren. Having laid aside all forms, as both idle and pernicious, it is well known, that they embrace every opportunity to improve what is termed the gift of prayer. In many parts of our country, there is scarcely an assembly of any description, which is not opened in this manner. Not only religious, but moral, literary, and humane societies ; not only these, but occasions are selected peculiarly inappropriate. A regiment cannot meet, an election cannot be held, but the confusion, turmoil, and strife of the subsequent scenes must be preceded by the supplications of a single individual, uttered in the name of a congregation, eagerly intent upon the amusement or the contention of the day, and never more unprepared to appear in the presence of a heart-searching God. But if our divine Lord intended that his followers should pursue a course of this kind, Why did he forbear to give us an example ? About to appear in far more important transactions ; about to heal the sick, to restore the lame and impotent, the blind, and deaf, and dumb ; about to cast out devils, and to raise the dead ; Why did he not call upon his disciples to listen to the devout aspirations of his soul, and unite in presenting them before his Father in heaven ?

Speaking after the manner of men, I should have thought the solemnity extremely judicious and proper ; but the thoughts of Christ were not as our thoughts. He never said to his disciples on these, or any other occasional, meetings, Let us pray. Often, as a preparatory exercise, he would retire by himself, and pour out his soul to God. At times, he would also lift up his eyes to heaven, and, in

some short personal ejaculation, invoke its blessing on the miracle about to be performed ; but a publick extemporary prayer, in its present acceptation, he never made. I have carefully examined all the incidents of his eventful life, and there is not one to be found. The pathetick intercession, in the fifteenth chapter of St. John, does not form an exception. The personal pronoun, *I*, is constantly employed, and like his other individual devotions, it was probably uttered in private, or else, in the mental form implied in this account, ‘And it came to pass, as he was ALONE, praying, his disciples were with him.’

And greatly am I supported in this interpretation, and in the general conclusion, by the terms adopted by his disciples, in the application already adverted to. ‘They could not but perceive the frequency with which he retired from their presence. They could not but know the reason. ‘And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’ The petition was immediately complied with, and the Lord’s prayer was the result.

But now, I ask you, if such a request would have ever been preferred by them, or either of them, provided they had been long accustomed to hear from his lips the language of prayer ? The answer cannot be mistaken. That hearing alone would have furnished them with the most fitly chosen words, as the model for their devotions. There would have been no necessity for the reply, ‘When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven,’ and so forth. For when, or where, in this age of unpremeditated publick addresses to God ; when or where, have you known the officiating minister to be solicited to teach his hearers to pray ? He, who is perpetually instructing them by his own performances, and who would be very apt to consider the petition itself an insidious attack upon his capacity to lead, in the worship of the sanctuary. How variant, then, must be his practice, from the practice of Christ ! How fairly may we presume, that this wonderful tact and volubility in publick prayer, so extensively witnessed in our age, was utterly unknown at the period, when the holy



Jesus went about continually doing good; when from village to village, from city to city, he performed his marvellous acts, and preached the gospel of the kingdom!

And has he not, in all things, left us an example, 'to walk even as he walked?' Has not the apostle directed us, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus?' What, then, are we to think of this extraordinary innovation and change? If he could approve, by his constant attendance, and scarcely to be questioned use, the precomposed liturgies of the temple and synagogue; What objection can any man rationally entertain to a similar mode of worship? If he could guard his disciples against being led astray by long prayers, delivered by hypocrites at the corners of the streets, to be seen of men; Why should we bestow our admiration upon these novel and unscriptural exhibitions of human ingenuity? If such language as this fell from his blessed lips, 'but thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly;' Why cannot we be influenced by an injunction enforced by his personal practice, rather than make our own thoughts and petitions the only medium and directory for the publick devotion of others?

I have, already, brethren, given you to understand, that it was my determination to be very direct and explicit; and this determination will be adhered to, in the future prosecution of a subject not yet exhausted. But permit me to assure you, that I speak more in sorrow than in anger, when the solemn convictions of duty compel me to raise my feeble voice against those innovations, whose tendency it is to sweep away the landmarks of the scriptures, and obscure the light of revealed truth. I will not impute intentional error to those whose practices I cannot shrink from opposing, but certainly it is equally, and even more disastrous, than if it had been deliberately and wantonly embraced. May God, therefore, of his infinite mercy, avert the increasing evils which it threatens; may he heal the dissensions which disturb the peace of Christendom, by ordering the steps of every man in the way he should

go; and to Him, the Father, with the Son and Holy Ghost, shall be ascribed, in the Unity of an ever blessed Trinity, everlasting praises. AMEN.

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## SERMON XII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

IT is not too much to assert, that the evidence, produced upon the last sabbath, was sufficient to convince all candid and unbiassed minds, that from the time of Moses to the period embraced by the ministry of Christ, all scripture is decidedly in favour of the use of forms of prayer, in the publick worship of God. So worshipped the Hebrews in the wilderness. So worshipped the prophets, and the church established at Jerusalem. So worshipped the Holy One of Israel, whose example, it might have been thought, would prove conclusive upon his followers; but against whom it has been left for modern Christians indirectly to prefer the charge of formality.

I must confess to you, that I can regard it in no other light. If we are formalists, simply because we are attached to forms of prayer, more especially to that form which Christ himself recommended, and even enjoined; so must this holy Being share the obloquy; so are we, in point of fact, defending him, when we are employed in exonerating ourselves from an unfounded aspersion; a consideration of itself sufficient to nerve our hearts, and embolden our speech. We know who it was that 'esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;' and was this endured in mere antici-

pation of his future advent? How much more should we be steadfast and unwavering in our imitation of him, who have been counselled by the words of his mouth, and directed by the purity and the holiness of his example! If men have nothing more substantial to allege to our prejudice; 'blessed are ye when' they 'shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.' Well may ye 'rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.'

But I have said, that the apostles were also accustomed to address the throne of mercy with precomposed prayers; and where is the person that can have the temerity to deny it? Even upon the supposition, that the bible was here entirely silent, their characters alone would furnish a species of evidence, which no art or ingenuity could possibly invalidate. For, were they not eminently faithful, and eminently obedient? After the miracle of the resurrection had thoroughly convinced them of the divinity and sonship of Christ, were they ever known intentionally to violate his commands; to set up their own in opposition to his will; and justify themselves on the pretence of superiour wisdom and sagacity? The very inquiry, if seriously proposed, would be an insult to their memory, and a libel upon their piety. We must cease to admire their holy boldness in the cause of Christ, we must cease to consider them his faithful ambassadors to the ends of the earth, the moment we admit, that they did not pray precisely as he directed them. If it was not hypocrisy, that induced them to ask, 'Lord, teach us to pray;' if there was no paltering with words in the reply, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven,' and the entertaining of such thoughts would be blasphemy; then is it most manifest, that the apostles habituated themselves to this inspired manual of devotion; then would it require a miracle to convince me, that these holy men disregarded the express command of their Master. They, who could 'count all things but loss for the excellency of his knowledge.' They, who for him, and the propagation of his gospel, freely encountered all manner of perils, by land and by sea. They, who hesitated not to seal with their

blood, the testimony they bore to the truth of his doctrines. No, no, such men could not but do, as Christ required; they could not but pray, as he himself had exacted. Whoever for the sake of a party would gainsay it, would for that party gainsay every thing sacred, and every thing divine. Upon this consideration alone, we may safely determine the true character of apostolick prayer, that it was by a form, a form prescribed by the great Head of the church, and imposing upon his chosen an obligation, equally coercive with the grand commission, to preach and baptize.

If, however, it should be imagined, that, in their more publick devotions, a greater latitude was permitted, not merely in relation to words, which no one denies, but even to precedent and principle; so that they were authorized to make their own extemporaneous prayers the leading worship of the sanctuary; to such an imagination, I have to object, that it is altogether gratuitous; that it is warranted by no permission given them by Christ; and by no fact appearing in the record of their ministry.

On the contrary, before his crucifixion, they had constantly attended him, in his visits to the temple and the synagogue, in order to participate in their service; and after his ascension, those visits were so far from being interrupted, that they are continually referred to. 'Peter and John,' for example, 'went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.' And of this temple 'was it written, My house shall be called the house of prayer?' At that very hour, were publick forms of devotion invariably rehearsed? You cannot possibly believe, that the apostles neglected to join in them; that they were mute spectators of the scene, neither approving or disapproving the service. The presumption would be more violent, than I am able to reconcile with their acknowledged piety on the one hand, or their matchless intrepidity on the other. Either those prayers were proper, and they piously united their own with the voice of the multitude, or they were improper, and they boldly denounced them, as lifeless and insipid forms. But not one word of censure can we discover; not one syllable did the apostles utter, in temple or in synagogue, to the prejudice

of a precomposed liturgy ; not one imputation was cast upon them by the Jews, for either discrediting their worship, or declining to adopt it for their own. The conclusion is therefore irresistible, that they both used and approved ; that ‘ Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer,’ with no such objection to prepared formularies, as many of our modern Christians consider unanswerably cogent and imperative.

Not, however, to confide entirely upon what may be termed negative evidence, I proceed to the positive, and find myself at once replenished with incontestable proof, that the apostles employed forms, in their joint devotions. On their return to ‘ Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, they went up into an upper room,’ and ‘ all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with the brethren.’ And that this ‘ one accord ’ was not the mere assent of the mind to petitions preferred by a single individual of their number, is obvious from the circumstance, that in the fourth chapter of the Acts, two of the apostles, and the company with them, are represented to have ‘ lifted up their voices to God with one accord,’ in a prayer, which is there preserved within the compass of seven verses, and that must necessarily have been previously made known and explained to the whole assembly. So likewise, in the case of Joseph and Matthias, the apostles, with one hundred and twenty disciples, ‘ prayed, and said, Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.’

How plainly, then, does the record disclose, by the introduction of these forms, what reason itself would teach, that they were enabled to lift up their voices simultaneously, owing to the fact of their having premeditated prayers to offer. Upon no other principle can we account for the vocal union, unless we resort to the immediate interference of the Spirit, and then it would only enhance the value of the authority in favour of forms. It would only prove, that upon sudden and unprepared emergencies,



they were miraculously furnished by the intervention of the Almighty himself.

There is, besides, a remarkable difference in the account given by the inspired writer, between the praying and the preaching of the apostles, which strongly confirms the doctrine I am endeavouring to maintain. When they, with other Christians, assembled for devotional exercises, the plural pronoun invariably appears. It is not said that Peter, or James, or John, or either of their brethren lifted up *his* voice and prayed in the name of all. But the language is, 'they prayed;' 'these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication;' 'they lifted up *their* voice to God with one accord.' The moment, however, that preaching commenced, the style is changed, and 'Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up *his* voice and said.' On another occasion, 'when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?' And so of every other recorded sermon, no matter how many apostles were present; one only is reported to have addressed it to the people, or the narrative is so constructed, as to make it evident, that they never united their voices in the delivery of a long protracted discourse.

The distinction is still more to the purpose, when the case of the disciples or congregation of believers is embraced. For they did not simply listen to prayers; 'they lifted up their voice to God with one accord.' But at the same time, they listened to preaching. And why? What reason can be assigned for this diversity? Surely, brethren, ye can be at no loss to anticipate the only fair construction. Prayers were previously known, and, therefore, they could join in them, with voice as well as with heart. Sermons were unknown, were delivered for their instruction, and, therefore, they could only receive them into honest and good hearts, that they might bring forth fruit unto holiness.

Let me also advert to another circumstance peculiarly impressive. Often is it mentioned, that, when the apostles and disciples were together, they united in publick devo-

tion. But when Paul was at Athens, and ‘certain philosophers of the epicureans, and of the stoicks encountered him,’ he could stand up in the midst of Mars hill, and pronounce the well known discourse, opening in this manner: ‘Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.’ And still there was no prayer, no asking of the assembly to worship God. If Paul had been accustomed to the extemporaneous kind, he could certainly have prayed for them, and they could and would have listened, as they did listen to his preaching. But there were no believers among them; they knew not how to call upon God, and for this reason he refrained from prayer; it would not have been publick worship; extemporary effusions were not then in vogue; and neither at this place, nor at any other, does he appear to have audibly prayed, unless there were some in the congregation who were antecedently prepared to mingle their voices with his own.

Tell me not, then, that the apostles were averse to pre-composed forms. If their practice had been similar to that of many of our modern missionaries, they would have always commenced their religious solemnities with prayer, whether it was known to the congregation or not, whether they had fellow worshippers or not.

I know very well the tenour of the argument advanced by our opponents. I have repeatedly heard it pronounced, with an air of triumph and exultation, worthy of a better cause, worthy of something more candid and ingenuous. It is this: Do you think that the apostles prayed with a book? Do you think that, when Paul kneeled down, with the disciples, upon the sea shore, at Tyre, ‘and prayed WITH THEM ALL,’ (an expression denoting vocal union, or why should ‘ALL’ be added?) he held a book in his hand?

I confess, indeed, that the objection is conclusive and unanswerable, with such as will neither investigate nor determine for themselves. But to those who prefer reason to ridicule, the inquiries will be far more to the purpose, Did not the apostles possess the faculty of memory? Could they not, as easily as ourselves, repeat from memory

the prayer of our Lord? We know that they did repeat it, and if the subject was not too serious, we might retort upon our dissenting brethren, Do you think that the apostles rehearsed it from a book? Do you think that as often as he used it, St. Paul held a book in his hand?

The truth is, that the argument is entirely unworthy of Christians. In the modern acceptation, there were no books at that time. Until long centuries after, the art of printing was unknown. Manuscripts alone were employed. The volume of inspiration itself was termed the scripture, or the scriptures. And did not Christ require his disciples to 'search the scriptures?' Did they not conform to the injunction, and address it to others? Did not Philip read from the scripture, in his interview with the eunuch, although he was before perfectly acquainted with its contents?

And precisely thus with liturgies: They also were written out, and set in order. They occupied a place in the Jewish temple and synagogues. The devotional psalms of David, whether of prayer or of praise, it will not be denied, were therein daily rehearsed, and not unseldom in the presence of Christ and his disciples. Why, then, all this contumely, this contemptuous sneering at books, now so easily obtained, and so admirably adapted to the uses of publick worship? Why, in particular, are not the questions triumphantly asked? Do you think that the apostles sang from a hymn book? Do you think that, 'at midnight, when Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God,' they held hymn books in their hands?

But enough of an objection more plausible than wise, more calculated to delude than to instruct. While printed psalms and hymns are to be found in the seceding churches, while they are mostly constructed in the language of supplication, opposition from that quarter to our book of common prayer, comes with an ill grace, and is chiefly remarkable for the inconsistency betrayed by the individuals who raise it.

The only remaining testimony, to which I have to call your attention upon the subject before us, is the practice of the primitive Christians. During the lives of the apos-

ties, they of course conformed to their example, as has been already sufficiently proved, and ever after, there was no departure from the principle divinely established. They used the prayer of our Lord. From a large number of authorities in my possession, I will present you with a few, from the most distinguished authors. Tertullian says, 'the Son taught us to pray, Our Father, which art in heaven.' He does not apprehend himself liable to the charge of formality, when he asserts, 'our Lord gave his new disciples of the new testament, a new FORM of prayer;' nor especially, when he terms it, 'the prayer appointed by law,' and 'the ordinary prayer, which is to be said before our other prayers; and upon which, as a foundation, our other prayers are to be built.' Cyprian observes, 'Christ himself gave us a form of prayer, and commanded us to use it; because when we speak to the Father in the Son's words, we shall be more easily heard.' But no one has expressed himself more explicitly and emphatically, than the pious and venerable Augustine, universally esteemed by catholic and protestant. Speaking of the Lord's prayer, these are his words: 'our Saviour gave it to the apostles, to the intent that they should use it; he taught it his disciples himself, and by THEM he taught it us; he dictated it to us, as a lawyer would put words in his client's mouth;' and again, 'It is necessary for all.' He even declares in the most solemn manner, that 'we cannot be God's children unless we use it.'

So true it is, therefore, brethren, that the primitive Christians recognised this inspired form, as having been the foundation and guide, the manual of apostolick devotion, and that they also regarded it as peremptorily enjoined upon their personal adoption. And this, not merely in private, but in publick, worship, for which the words of the prayer are indeed most suitable; it being drawn up in the plural number, and so designed to be uttered, where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ.

Consider, then, that if they are thus clearly and indisputably proved to have repeated one form, in the course of their publick service, no objection would be likely to

exist against the rehearsal of another and another; that the approbation of their Lord being fully ascertained in one instance, they would not be slow to believe it a sufficient warrant and pattern, or, as Tertullian calls it, a foundation for their other prayers. Accordingly, we find, from the unanimous testimony of all antiquity, that they were not more addicted to 'singing and making melody in' their 'hearts to the Lord,' with precomposed 'psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs,' than they were to supplicating his mercy and forgiveness, his grace and heavenly benediction, with precomposed prayers. He who could doubt this, might as well doubt that there were such men as Justin Martyr and Origen, the former of whom speaks of 'common prayer,' and the latter of 'constituted prayers;' might as well doubt that Cyril was bishop of Jerusalem, at the middle of the fourth century, and contend that he never made a commentary upon the liturgy ascribed to the apostle James, when that commentary is still extant, and Jerome assures us that he wrote it in his younger years.

My limits will only permit me to add, that many liturgies were early composed and introduced into the primitive church. Some of them were attributed to the apostles, as those of Peter and James, and one to the evangelist Mark. Others were anonymous, as those of Rome and Alexandria; and others were known to have been written by Basil, Chrysostom, and Ambrose. There is, indeed, no one fact in ecclesiastical history susceptible of stronger proof, than the universal prevalence of precomposed forms of prayer from the earliest times. No other publick worship obtained; no other has been alluded to by the writers who flourished in the first centuries of the Christian era. And are we accustomed to pronounce them the best and purest ages of the church, the ages most distinguished for heartfelt piety, for holy obedience, and unaffected renunciation of the world and the fashion thereof? How justly may we infer that those prayers, instead of being gradually introduced to the exclusion of such as were unpremeditated and extemporary; that those prayers were in strict accordance with the worship observed by the apostles, and therefore sanctioned by the unerring wisdom of God.



It is also worthy of remark, that the ancient Syrian church discovered in India by Buchanan, and which, you will remember, had no intercourse with the western Christians, for thirteen hundred years from the apostolick age, was utterly ignorant of extemporary prayers, and possessed a liturgy, believed by its bishop to have been coeval with its origin. 'Here,' says the missionary, 'as in all churches in a state of decline, there is too much formality in the worship. But they have the bible and a scriptural liturgy; and these will save a church in the worst of times.'

We may, indeed, challenge our opponents to produce one single instance of publick worship, celebrated in a different manner, antierior to the reformation in Germany and Switzerland. By whom extemporary prayers were there introduced, I am unable to determine. It was not by the reformer Calvin, for in a letter to the duke of Somerset, lord protector of England, written in the year fifteen hundred and forty-nine, he was evidently opposed to such an innovation, and says, 'I do highly approve that there should be a certain form of prayer and ecclesiastical rites. From which it should not be lawful for the pastors themselves to discede. First, that provision may be made for some people's ignorance and unskilfulness. Second, that the consent of all churches amongst themselves may the more plainly appear. Third, that order may be taken against the desultory levity of such, who delight in innovations. Thus there ought to be an established catechism, an established administration of sacraments, (*publicam item precum formulam*,) as also **A PUBLICK FORM OF PRAYER.**'

The old historian Fuller inserts the original words, with the remark, that they 'deserve our translation and observation;' and I know not that Calvin ever varied his sentiments. They are such as do credit to his judgment and sagacity, and, if widely circulated, might possibly relieve us from much of the odium so profusely lavished upon our service, by the very description of innovators, whom he so freely condemns.

The origin of extemporary prayers in England is better

understood. They were contrived by popish emissaries disguised in the garb of protestantism, and pretending the utmost abhorrence of what they stigmatized as the corruptions of popery, still existing in the English church. The object was to produce division and dissension, as the surest mode of bringing the reformed religion into disrepute, and regaining the ascendancy once enjoyed by the Roman pontiff. For this purpose, among other things, they were loud in their invectives against the liturgy; they vilified it, as a new edition of the mass book, and insisted upon its being wholly abandoned by such as were desirous of praying under the immediate influence of the Spirit of God.

Unhappily, they were but too successful in their efforts. They impaired the unity, although they could not destroy the existence, of the true church of God. Numbers were attracted by the fluency and apparent devotion with which these new fangled prayers were uttered; they did not hesitate to ascribe them to the direct agency of the Holy Spirit; and soon began to manifest a dislike to the service of the church, which finally terminated in irreconcilable hatred and disgust.

Delighted with the success of their first enterprise, England was destined to be thoroughly inundated with these counterfeit reformers; they penetrated through all parts of the country; and, wherever they appeared, new sects sprung up with mushroom precocity, differing widely on many doctrinal points, and conspiring in nothing else but a determination to eradicate the artfully assumed relics of popery. Against all forms of devotion they were particularly exasperated, and would by no means tolerate their feigned mummary. Extemporary prayer was the nucleus round which these incongruous materials could gather with one accord. And such was its origin in the land of our ancestors. A few of its abettors were discovered, as Cumming, Heth, and others; their real character was ascertained; their disguised protestantism proved and their actual devotion to papacy unmasked. But the larger number escaped; they sowed the seeds of innumerable heresies and schisms, and persuaded their deluded

followers that they, and they only, were the salt of the earth, and the light of the world.

But no longer to dwell upon a subject so painful in the retrospect, and yet, it is to be feared, so little calculated to conciliate the wanderer, and bring him back to the fold from which he has strayed ; I prefer to congratulate you upon the distinguished honour we enjoy, through adherence to those precomposed forms of worship, in whose favour such a cloud of witnesses has been adduced. And who, I ask, is best entitled to determine the manner in which the Supreme Being is to be worshipped? Is it the Creator himself, or the man he has formed? The object to be adored, or the person required to adore? The Infinite and Omniscient, who can alone comprehend his own glory, or the finite and ignorant, from whom its brightest effulgence is veiled by interposing clouds and darkness? The far-searching Spirit, who can read the inmost thoughts of the heart; who can detect at a glance its wandering affections, and alone recall and fasten them upon his matchless perfections, or the purblind, wretched mortal, that is often at a loss to fathom his own spirit, that knows nothing as he ought to know it, and that left to himself is emphatically the spoiled child of vanity and self-delusion? Who, I repeat, is best entitled to determine?

Most clearly, brethren, there can be no room for hesitancy in the reply. Nor ought there to be any in the alacrity, with which obedience should be rendered. When God speaks, it is not for man to raise his feeble voice and puny strength in opposition. It is for him to bow the soul and bend the will, to extinguish self and pluck out the evil heart of unbelief. And that he has spoken, plainly and directly spoken, is as evident as the day, and as clear as the sun, in the heavens. On no other principle would Moses, in the old testament, have prepared his song of triumph, and recorded his inspired prayers for deliverance; would David have indited his psalmody, and joined it to the spirit-stirring worship of Israel. On no other principle would Jesus, in the new, have imbodied his form of prayer; would the apostles and primitive Christians have treasured it up, in the greenest spot of their remembrance.

But all these things, as Paul says upon a different theme, 'all these things' have 'happened unto' us 'for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' If we have a right to depart from them, by substituting a novel and unpremeditated mode of worshipping God; we are equally at liberty to follow our own fancy, in rejecting all the remaining rites and institutions of the gospel; we are bound by nothing but our own pleasure, and even this may vibrate backwards and forwards, as policy serves, and capricious humours predominate; one while inclining us to follow after, and at another to vary from, the example of Christ.

But if this doctrine be false, this irresponsible state be the creature of our own imagination, if baptism, for instance, be binding, and the supper of the Lord binding; so, in publick worship, must forms of prayer be construed with the same rigour, and exact the same obedience. The expressions, 'repent and be baptized,' 'do this in remembrance of me,' are no more peremptory than, 'when ye pray say.'

I can neither understand nor approve the nice distinctions so often attempted to be drawn. There is even prevailing with many Christians an evident anxiety to ascertain, how far a person may venture to dissent from the counsels of God, without involving the soul in everlasting ruin. It is not meant, that they make this a question, under the conviction of having already been guilty of such dissent. But amid numerous conflicting opinions, they have acquired the habit of resting satisfied with their own, not upon the principle of its being clearly warranted by the scriptures; but because, without troubling themselves to make a diligent and laborious investigation, they have settled the matter in their own minds, that if they are wrong, the deviation must be too trifling and unimportant to affect their future interests.

Nothing, therefore, is more common than the idea of there being different routes to heaven. Nothing is deemed more uncharitable than to insinuate, that an unbaptized

adult, or a non-communicating adult is placed in an imminently perilous and critical condition; although the language of the bible is, 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;' and again, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.'

But for my own part, brethren, I am decidedly opposed to this summary species of casuistry, this unscriptural method of disposing of cases of conscience, and of opening several doors and avenues to heaven; when there is but one strait gate and one narrow way. They may accord with the divinity of the times; but they do not accord with the divinity of the bible, and, therefore, they are not to my mind; therefore, although my own judgment makes every allowance for modal errors in others, and my convictions are, that many of the unbaptized and non-communicating will hereafter be found among the saints of the Most High; yet would I not recommend any to confide in that judgment, or to trust in those convictions. My doctrine and advice are rather of this nature: 'Hear the word of the Lord;' 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest' the holy scriptures. They are able to make you wise unto salvation, and if ye will but adopt this course, neither turning to the right hand nor to the left, with the view of indulging in what are called trivial errors, neither making flesh your arm, nor designedly suffering your hearts to depart in one single particular from the Lord; if ye will do this, ye cannot fail of making your calling and election sure.

With such dispositions, such intense anxiety to be found blameless in all things, such pious and determined resolutions to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God; if ye be not saved, I know not who will. There may be errors, but they will be errors of the judgment, and not of the heart. And for these, no Christian, let him belong to Greek or Roman church, to our own or any denomination confessing the fundamental doctrines of the cross, will be liable to endure the severity of God's displeasure. I speak with confidence, because I have exacted all that God exacts. I have required of every man to be fully and



deliberately, and not capriciously and hastily persuaded in his own mind. And may our heavenly Father, in the multitude of his mercies, bring all these things to pass, with us his dependant creatures; may we truly love and honour, and rightly worship and serve him; may our heads be wise, our hearts pure, our consciences without offence, and our immortal souls duly prepared to enter into the embraces of his everlasting love; and to Him, with the Son and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, shall be ascribed all praise, and glory, and dominion, and power, world without end. **AMEN.**

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## SERMON XIII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

IN the remarks hitherto made upon the subject of public forms of prayer, I have almost exclusively confined myself to their vindication upon the ground of authority. I have shown you, what the scriptures have said, what prophets and apostles, with Christ our Saviour, have practised, what primitive Christians and their successors to the sixteenth century were unanimous in adopting, with all the ardour of sincere devotion, and all the obedience of triumphant faith. My own opinion is, that in all such cases, we are to submit our own judgment unreservedly to the clear intimations of the sacred volume. We are to exercise our reason in searching them out, but having made the discovery, reason must bow with reverence to the teachings of the Holy Spirit. No improvements are to be suggested, no changes are to be advised or attempted.

What was true in Christianity eighteen hundred years ago, is true at this moment. What mode of worship was, then, best adapted to propitiate the mercy and favour of God, still maintains the pre-eminence, and is not to be rejected in deference to the inventions of men, or in subserviency to the maxims of worldly popularity.

I am not for having the gospel and its institutions veered about to every point of the compass, just as the breath of the multitude inclines, and as it may be found in human apprehension expedient to yield to their caprice, and harmonize with their perpetually varying prejudices. But what say the scriptures? What examples are by them recorded for our instruction? These are questions which weigh with me infinitely more than the prepossessions of my fellow men. I will honour and respect their opinions on all other subjects, but when they come in contact with the words of truth and soberness, the voice of God is with me of incalculably greater value and authority, than the voice of the people. They may extol extemporaneous publick prayers. An imposing majority of their number, in this western world, may be decidedly in their favour, but so long as the bible refuses to give them the slightest countenance, I will prefer the church, that orders her worship in accordance with the bible; I will believe, that precomposed forms of prayer are far better calculated to preserve the excellency and the beauty of holiness.

For what is the object of publick worship? Is it to hear another praise the Lord? To hear him confess, that universal man is guilty in the sight of heaven, and in absolute need of the quickening influence of converting and sustaining grace? To hear him invoke the divine blessing, and confide in the fervency of his intercessions alone? Is it to admire the fluency of his delivery, the copiousness of his rhetoric, the graceful ease and measured cadence of his periods? If this be publick worship, I readily subscribe to the superiority of that system, which authorizes one to pray for all, and that affords him so admirable an opportunity to build up a reputation, for shining talents and eloquent appeals to God.

With our venerable formularies, we can make no such

pretensions, nor attract the eulogy of one applauding tongue. But if it be publick worship for all hearts and lips to praise and pray, to lift up the voice with one accord, and either shout hosannas, or implore the remission of unnumbered sins; then must that form of sound words be greatly preferable, which all may understand, and in which all may cordially unite. We can come together, conscious of what we are about to utter, and depending on no one to select the language appropriate to the condition and feelings of the bleeding heart. There is no weighing of petitions before they can be personally employed; no tax upon the understanding to determine whether they be right or wrong; no effort of the mind to keep pace with the affections, in their projected flight to the throne of grace. On the part of the devout Christian, already have the words been carefully perused, and the petitions deliberately approved. The soul is, therefore, at liberty to concentrate all its powers, in elevating the heart to Him, who requires its liveliest devotion; the heart, without which all our prayers are vain, and all our expectations of divine favour excessively idle and presumptuous.

I am aware, indeed, of the vulgar error. I know how generally the opinion prevails, that unpremeditated effusions are alone cordial and sincere. But with what propriety, it would require a wiser head than mine to comprehend, whether it applies to the speaker or the hearer: The speaker, whose mind must necessarily be in some measure employed in the conception of thoughts and the choice of words: The hearer, who before he can unite must rapidly perform five distinct intellectual acts. He must first hear, then understand, then judge, then approve, and then pray.

Whereas in forms of prayer, the affections are left free and unembarrassed. They are not disturbed or neutralized, by the simultaneous inventions and operations of the head. They can rise on strong, elastick wing, and play, as it were, around the throne of mercy. There is no such hinderance upon the emotions of love and gratitude, but they may be there; none upon desire and admiration, but they may be riveted with intense and eager

delight upon the divine perfections. Let men, therefore, indulge what fancies they please, to me it is evident that if they have no heart to pray, with such words as the Holy Ghost teaches, they can have none to lift up to God, with words of their own.

Here also, brethren, it will be proper to remind you of another and a very important advantage resulting from the use of forms of prayer. They are more likely to ensure the union of all hearts in publick worship. Nothing, indeed, can effect this, where there is no previous inclination or desire to praise and pray. But among those, who for these purposes appear in the courts of the Lord's house, it is not to be denied, that a perfect knowledge of the language and sentiments to be addressed to God, peculiarly promotes the harmony of feeling, so desirable in devotions professing to be general and united.

Under such circumstances, no one has cause to fear lest the officiating minister should employ ill-chosen words, or prefer improper petitions; lest he should express himself with irreverent familiarity, or indulge in offensive doctrinal points, or even give way to personal resentments and antipathies. By precomposed liturgies, all these things are avoided. The aspirations of the devout worshipper are neither perplexed, nor entirely defeated. Whatever he may think of the sermon, however he may lament its errors and deficiencies, on retiring to his home, he can at least please himself with these reflections: I have this day offered appropriate homage to the God that made me, and whom I am bound to serve; I have praised and magnified the Lord; I have thanked him for his numerous blessings; at his footstool, I have publicly confessed my sins, and acknowledged the imperfection attending my best services; I have implored their pardon and forgiveness; I have sought for new and more copious streams of grace; I have disposed my spirit for their reception, by the excellency of my words, and the sincerity and earnestness, with which they have been pronounced.

But when extemporary prayers are offered, if they really constitute publick worship, how often have the congregation been compelled to pray in terms, as foreign to their

intentions, as diametrically opposed to the character of true devotion. How often have expressions been put in their mouths, which their souls have utterly loathed and abhorred. How often have they been made to adopt all the strange fancies and heterodox sentiments of some wild enthusiast, craving of God, as blessings, what they would prefer to deprecate, as curses. How often been obliged to yield a publick assent to all the enmities of their leader, and to be dragged before the throne of love, using prayers imbittered by malice, and defiled with imprecations. How often been represented through one organ of devotion soliciting, or returning thanks for, the precise gifts, from which another is soon destined to make them implore deliverance.

Yes, brethren, these are incidents by no means uncommon, particularly in seasons of strong excitement, whether religious or political. Ministers are men of like passions with yourselves, and when left to their own discretion, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth will speak, causing the hearer, in the house of God, to appear before him, thinking as they think, and praying as they pray. So far from these remarks being the creation of fancy, repeatedly have I heard the Christian denouncing the prayer of his pastor; at one time lamenting its impropriety, and at another shocked by its asperity. And all this, without imagining it to have been his own prayer, the prayer which he countenanced by his presence, and in which he publicly professed to unite, by rising up in the attitude of devotion. But let me tell him, it either was his own and that of the congregation, who ostensibly gave it their assent, or else the principal object for which they were assembled, the object of joining in the publick worship of God, was completely frustrated. And is that mode of conducting the service to be preferred by believers in Christ, which exposes them to this predicament; which makes them for the time passive instruments in the mouth of one man; and to the eye at least fervently engaged in petitions, which from their very souls they detest?

Not such were the prayers, which the apostles and primitive Christians used with one accord. No such ob-



stacles impeded the lifting up of their united voices, and, wherever they do exist, wherever the fault, instead of being chargeable to the heart, is to be attributed to the unwarrantable collocation of words and ideas, then does publick worship in that instance become a solemn farce, a presumptuous trifling with Almighty God; with Him, who requires us not to be rash with our mouths, nor hasty in uttering any thing before him. And yet, we are not afraid of regularly placing ourselves in a situation, where we are liable to be rash with the mouth, and hasty with the heart, of another, over whom we have no control, and whose most glaring extravagancies are sanctioned by our seeming acquiescence.

I know not, brethren, how these things may affect your minds; but of this I am sure, that while our forms of worship are perfectly pure and unobjectionable, and nothing is demanded to make them acceptable unto God, but a true state of the heart and its affections; it is beyond all doubt, that the pious and godly, among our dissenting brethren, are frequently made to pray as opposite to their real intentions, as light is opposite to darkness; made to prefer petitions, at different times, flagrantly inconsistent the one with the other, petitions which no finite being could possibly reconcile with sincere devotion, and which the Infinite alone has wisdom sufficient to separate, and either accept or reject, as they would have them accepted or rejected.

And here I am naturally led, by the subject, to advert to a consideration rarely or never permitted to occupy the minds of our fellow Christians. They can declaim with wonderful facility against our forms of prayer, and, however compelled to acknowledge the excellency of their spirit, can loudly condemn the supposed corruption, which must attend upon their practice; but at the same time, how lamentably ignorant do they appear to be, that if their objections and reproaches are just, they themselves are in a tenfold greater degree the subjects of corruption. For when you come to analyze their prayers, what are they in reality but FORMS? With the speaker they may be unpremeditated, and conceived at the moment; but what

have the congregation to do with them, before they escape his lips? What part of them is to be imputed to their immediate conceptions? They cannot speak with his mouth, much less can they, in a state of silence, transfer their thoughts to his mind. And the consequence is, that, so far as they are concerned, a form is imposed upon their observance, from which there is no appeal, and with which they must pray, or else entirely refrain from their incumbent duty.

If there be any error in this statement, I have not the capacity to detect it. In order for the prayers of any assembly to be truly extemporaneous, they must necessarily spring up in the mind, and be uttered by the voice, of each individual worshipper. Prayers, composed of words that are spoken, are no less forms to such as use them after their delivery, than are prayers previously drawn up and committed to the press; while the disadvantages attending them are infinitely greater than those imagined to exist with our own. There is no time allowed to judge of them with deliberation and care, no time to detect their slight, and none to object to their weighty, errors. But precisely as spoken are they prescribed upon all who hear. The very men who would not sign an important publick address to an earthly ruler, without carefully perusing its contents, have no conscientious scruples in permitting themselves to be included, in an equally publick and far more important address to the sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth, without being apprized of a single sentence designed to be employed.

Can this be right? Are they, who follow such sudden, evanescent, and often ungracious forms, justified in turning to ridicule, and proclaiming as corrupt, formularies of devotion that have stood the test of ages, and commanded the admiration of the world? Are they, moreover, to be branded as formalists, who come into the dread presence of God with a clear understanding of every word they are about to utter; who have cautiously examined every petition, and been able to discover nothing but what their heads approve, and their hearts are desirous to adopt? I can never subscribe to such sentiments. However popu-

lar, they savour too much of the wisdom of this world, and are in no little danger of being regarded as foolishness with God. Others may worship him with forms of which they have no knowledge; but for me, I will adhere to those which are as familiar to my mind as is the nature of the spiritual wants they were intended to supply.

Nor, in arriving at this determination, have I overlooked another, and a very material reason. Precomposed forms of prayer harmonize with precomposed forms of praise. Both were used in the Jewish temple and synagogue, and, in addition to what has been elsewhere suggested, we may be confident that both were directed to be transferred to the Christian church, from the well known declaration of Paul, 'I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.' A declaration that clearly ascertains the two prominent qualifications of publick prayer and praise. The first, that they must come warm from the heart, and the second, that they must be clothed with words, upon which the mind has been enabled to exercise its judgment.

No difference whatever between the two kinds of devotion has been intimated by the apostles. The expressions, applied to the one, are as emphatically applied to the other. And are we obliged to use forms in singing the high praises of our God? Is this of invincible necessity, inasmuch as the Spirit refuses the gift of extemporaneous metre? And do our opponents admit in principle, and in practice, that it is far from impossible to conduct this part of divine worship in an acceptable manner, notwithstanding its precomposed character? How extremely preposterous to make a distinction where Paul hath made none! How strangely inconsistent to cavil at written forms of prayer, when they profess to be almost divinely inspired, as with prepared hymns, they are found combining their voices in melodious praise! Surely if God loathes a form in the one case, he must loathe it in the other. On the contrary, if he has made it absolutely indispensable in singing, he cannot but prefer it in praying, with the spirit. I can perceive no one plausible ground for the variance, and am

constrained to believe, that were it practicable for a congregation to sing extempore, we should soon find that the spiritual songs already composed would be discarded by the various sectaries with disgust, and condemned as imposing too great a restraint upon a free spirit, and as fit only to be recited by the lukewarm and indifferent.

Such we know to be the language unhesitatingly applied to our prayers, and it would be the same with our psalms and hymns. They only escape because their nature is incorrigible; they will not endure the metamorphosis, which has been fastened upon the kindred office of devotion; and, therefore, if the example of Paul is rejected in prayer, he is from necessity, it is to be feared, rather than choice, permitted to be imitated in singing with the spirit, and with the understanding.

Recollect, also, that our fellow Christians can readily tune their voices with their hearts to sing repeatedly the same devotional hymn. They do not on this account imagine it to be the less pleasing to the divine ear, nor do they rack their inventions to come before him with an ever varied song of praise. But the moment their attention is turned to prayer, then indeed is the same stated form most violently assailed, then does it become intolerably lifeless and dull to pray, sabbath after sabbath, with no other change than that supplied by a few collects, adapted to the course of the ecclesiastical year.

I cannot learn that the disciples of Christ were thus grievously offended, when directed by him to lift up their hearts, day by day, to their Father in heaven, according to a certain form, although that form was extremely comprehensive and brief. But, in the opinion of many, the favour of the Almighty, at this period, materially depends upon the dexterity with which it can be invoked, with ever new and changing prayers. No matter if the spiritual necessities of the people are always the same. No matter if God has declared that he is apprized of them, before they are sought to be relieved; still our devotions must be mutable, or they can never avail with Him who is immutable; still there is such a wide distinction between hymns and prayers, that while the former may be

successfully repeated every day of our lives, the repetition of the latter is offensive and odious; they must be new every morning.

And here I must confess to you, that if the immaculate Jehovah were precisely such a being as is described, so easily caught by the rhetorick of words, and pleased with novelty, it would indeed ensure our condemnation, in the day of judgment, should we persist in our established mode of worship. Far better would it be to discard it, at the instance of our wiser brethren, and conform to their standard, although it were even more variable than the wind. Only, we should seek to improve it, by constantly changing our hymns, as well as our prayers.

But, then, the misfortune is, that they have no arguments to convince our understanding, and no authority with which to control our judgment; none from reason, and none from scripture. Our God is not as they would represent him. He requires truth in the inward parts, and instead of laboured changes in the expression of prayer, he demands familiarity with prayer itself. What may gratify the hearer, in extemporaneous addresses, is by no means certain of gratifying him. Our fancies may be amused, and our admiration of the speaker's talents highly wrought; but heartfelt devotion is with God the standard of excellence, and the measure of his grace. Give me this, and I am content with our incomparable liturgy; I will not despair of being finally accepted of our Father in heaven, owing to the absence of variable words, and unpremeditated thoughts.

Neither am I to be deterred from using it, in virtue of another formidable objection, which relates to the responses made by our congregations; responses, that are not only freely condemned with the residue of the worship, but are particularly implicated as obvious violations of the inspired command, 'When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.' Since you must allow me to ask, if penitential expressions, extracted with reverence from the scriptures, can, under any circumstances of sincere devotion, be justly considered vain? Is it not rather the



unmeaning and unmeasured employment of Lord, Lord? Is it not rather long and tedious prayer, ever reiterating the same idea in different words, and perhaps preaching to the Father of lights the knowledge of his own perfections?

Taking the Saviour for our guide, you have only to accompany him to the garden of Gethsemane, and you may there behold him fallen upon his face, and three several times repeating the well known prayer, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.' And then, when the multitude were offended at the continued importunity of blind Bartimeus; when 'many charged him that he should hold his peace, but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me;' this blessed Being did not reprove him for using vain repetitions. It did not once occur to the Saviour of sinners, that he had expressed himself in language either unsuited to the occasion, or such as it would be reprehensible to adopt in future times, when the broken and contrite heart would plead with its Maker, and avail itself of the riches of his grace. He rather bestowed unqualified approbation upon his conduct; he relieved him of his malady, and spoke the words of peace and comfort to his troubled spirit.

And so with the condemned responses in the service of the church; let us only prefer them with the spirit, and with the understanding; let us only appear before God weeping, bearing precious seed, and we shall come again rejoicing, whether we use the prayer of the gospel, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us;' or the equally appropriate supplications of the litany, 'Good Lord, deliver us;' and again, 'We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.' The two exclamations being admirably suited to humbling convictions of guilt, and to that now melancholy depravity of our moral powers, which assimilates our race to all that is poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. We may easily construct sentences with a more beautiful dress, and conveying a more melodious sound; but there are none, excepting the petitions contained in the prayer of our Lord, better calculated to arrest the attention of heaven, and to draw down upon our souls the mercy of Him,

whose favour is life, and whose loving kindness is better than the life itself.

All the views I am capable of embracing, of our Saviour's intercourse with his disciples, are decidedly in unison with our forms of devotion. You have heard that he never prayed with them extemporaneously. You have heard that he taught them how to pray. And why these remarkable variations from the practice of many of our modern evangelists? Why, when private devotion is inculcated, does he say to his disciples individually, 'ΤΗΟΥ, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly?' But, when that which is publick, 'If two of you shall AGREE ON EARTH as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where TWO OR THREE are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?' From these scriptures, corroborated by others already adduced, I should think that the prayer uttered by one man ought always to be private, and not in the presence of his fellow men, intent upon catching the words of his mouth, although it were for the purpose of making those words their own. I should think that prayers in publick, where two or three, and of course a larger number, are gathered together, ought always to be prepared beforehand, by a mutual understanding of what was to be asked, either committed to memory or to paper. Such are the obvious inferences, and since there is nothing contradictory throughout the new testament, I am bold to affirm, that they are fairly and legitimately drawn. Especially am I bold to affirm this, in relation to common prayer, from examining the original word translated 'agree.' It is *συμφωνῆσιν*, compounded of *συν*, together, and *φωνῆ*, a voice; anglice, symphony. So that if the passage had been literally rendered, the agreement in question would have been vocal in English as well as in Greek. It would have been thus: 'If two of you speak together, (or lift up the voice together,) as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.'

But still the question recurs, Why these remarkable variations from the practice of many of our modern evangelists? I have already assigned several reasons, and am disposed to advance another, founded upon this admonition of Christ, 'learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' If daily experience and observation have ever instructed the world in any one truth more than another, it is this : the wonderful tendency of extemporaneous prayers to make men spiritually proud, boastful, and uncharitable. Numerous exceptions undoubtedly exist, and I rejoice that they do. I have no such diabolical feelings as to regret that persons are trained up for heaven, in a different communion from that to which I am so strongly attached. I love to contemplate and admire ; I should be glad to be enabled, from on high, to rival the now sainted virtues of Doddridge, Watts, and a host of other worthies, long since fallen asleep in Jesus. But as a general rule, it ever has been, and I am apprehensive it ever will be, found, that these prayers are followed by such results, and are exceedingly unfavourable to the growth of that humility and lowliness of heart recommended by our Saviour, and perhaps, of all graces, the most difficult to be successfully cultivated by any Christian.

On no other principle, can I account for the vast amount of scorn and contempt so prodigally lavished upon pre-composed prayers. A furious zealot once 'declared from his pulpit, that the common prayer book had damned more souls than the bible had saved.' Upon no other, resolve the melancholy fact, of there being immense numbers of professing believers, who roundly assert that such as pray with a form can never pray with the heart ; that fluent, extemporaneous prayer is one of the highest gifts of the Spirit ; and that we do not practise it because he is a stranger to our souls.

God forgive them ! I will not so libel the wise and good, the excellent of the earth, as to pray that these persons may prove egregiously mistaken in their estimate of the purest and holiest men, upon whom the Sun of Righteousness has risen, with healing on his wings. 'The

rebuke which their predecessors received, from no less a man than the justly celebrated Richard Baxter, is sufficient for my purpose. These are his words: 'Is it not a high degree of pride to conclude, that almost all Christ's churches in the world, for these thirteen hundred years at least, to this day, have offered such worship unto God as that you are obliged to avoid it? And that almost all the catholick church on earth, this day, is below your communion for using forms? And that even Calvin, and the presbyterians, Cartwright, Hildersham, and the old non-conformists were unworthy of your communion?' But this I must say of these uncharitable defamers, that their conduct and their aspersions furnish the best commentary upon the instruction given by Christ to his disciples, in relation to private and publick prayer.

Be it, therefore, brethren, deeply engraven upon our minds, and let us ever yield to it a most cheerful obedience. So, whatever man may say, shall we secure the approbation of our own consciences, and what is of still greater value and importance, the approbation of our God. So, if life be spared, shall we yet perceive the righteousness of our Zion to go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. And when at length our days are numbered, and our sands are run, so shall we be admitted into mount Zion above, into that New Jerusalem, where, in the majestick presence of the High and Lofty One, will be everlastingly resounded these memorable forms of praise: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;' and again; 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.' AMEN.

## SERMON XIV.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth*

As the frequent recital of the text must have rendered it perfectly familiar to the ear, it can scarcely have escaped your observation, brethren, that the prophet has made an obvious distinction between the righteousness and the salvation of the church. To the former, I have hitherto principally, if not entirely, confined my remarks. It relates to the exterior edifice of Zion; to that beautiful garb in which she has been arrayed, by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and presented as a chaste bride to his only begotten and well beloved Son.

Having minutely examined her, in this particular; having largely proved the scriptural character and complexion of her external features, that, like the king's daughter described in the psalms, 'her clothing is of wrought gold;' I cannot but hope that you will consider my early pledges satisfactorily redeemed, and concur with me in the opinion, that, in the defence of such a church as our own, they who minister at her altar should, in the spirit of Isaiah, neither hold their peace nor rest, 'until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness.'

To the latter clause of his interesting vow, I must not, however, fail to solicit an equal share of attention, although the discussion will be much more partial and restricted. Often in the scriptures do we meet with such expressions as these: the word of salvation; the joy of salvation. Expressions that are not to be construed literally, but metonymically; salvation having no other connexion with the word or with joy than this; the word unfolds the doctrine of redemption, and there is joy attending the convic-



tion of our being placed in a state of acceptance with God. So in the text: By the salvation of Zion and Jerusalem, it is not meant that the church is the efficient cause of future happiness, nor that every individual within its pale necessarily becomes the heir of glory and immortality. But the real meaning is, that divine truth is therein inculcated; that the doctrines, which are according to godliness, accompany the bride of the Holy One; and that men have only to embrace them with a true heart in full assurance of faith, in order to receive the end of that faith, even the salvation of their souls.

That our church, brethren, is fully entitled to this enviable character, I shall endeavour to establish, with as much brevity as possible. Examine her doctrines, thoroughly examine, and give to them the unhesitating assent of the mind, the unswerving obedience of the heart; and there is not one of you but shall have ample reason to rejoice, at the zeal of all those her faithful ministers who fearlessly and piously resolve neither to hold their peace nor rest, until the salvation thereof shall go forth as a lamp that burneth.

As you have already learnt, I am not ignorant of the odium, with which sectarian prejudice has contrived to surround her; how every stripling in divinity can brandish the weapons of calumny and detraction, imputing to her clergy and laity principles and practices which they loathe and abhor. I am not ignorant that she is looked upon with an evil eye by multitudes who have no knowledge of the faith she embraces, and the works she is solicitous to maintain. I am not ignorant that, precisely as it was said by them of old time, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' so, in these modern days, the question is not only asked, Can there any good thing come out of a church so formal and corrupt? but the assertion is proudly and boldly hazarded, that her members have no saving faith, no vital religion, no warm and decided attachment to their God and Saviour. I am not ignorant of these things, nor of those answers of silent pity and compassion, which they would alone deserve, were it not that many of the pious and worthy are miserably deceived and

led away by the most foul aspersions. A consideration sufficiently powerful to prevail with me to attempt the removal of the veil from their eyes, and to inspire them with more just and generous sentiments.

With this view, be it known, that there is not one, among the reformed churches, which occupies a rank so distinguished on the page of history ; not one whose zeal for the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom has been so ardent and persevering ; not one to whom the world has been so much indebted for the labours of love and benevolence. What were the original reformers in England but churchmen ? What other bodies than theirs were freely given to be burned, in order to satiate the vengeance of a papal queen, and bear the noblest testimony in favour of pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father ? It is not so long since, but we may easily ascertain whose blood it was that proved the seed of the protestant church, in the land of our forefathers. Our opponents cannot rob us of the sainted names of Cranmer, and Hooper, and Latimer, and Ridley. These are our martyred worthies ; these, the first fruits of our reformed Zion ; these, the faithful and holy, who, guided by the directing hand of Providence, first restored her to primitive order and simplicity, and then counted not their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received from the Lord Jesus. Tell me not, then, with such examples before the world, such unequivocal demonstrations of love to Christ, and devotedness to his service ; tell me not of the church reclaimed and purified by them, the church adorned by their lives, and hallowed by their deaths, that it affords no asylum to the broken and contrite spirit ; that its doctrines and worship are unfavourable to the progress of religion in the soul, and its members comparatively destitute of that warmth of attachment towards their august Redeemer, which is vehemently claimed by their Christian brethren. When it shall be seen, that a nobler army of martyrs have laid the foundation of a human church, and when it shall be proved that our own Zion has degenerated from the doctrines maintained by her almost

inspired reformers, it will then be time to boast of a purer origin, a more scriptural faith, and a more holy obedience.

Nor let it cease to be remembered, that the brightest page, in modern ecclesiastical history, is consecrated to the glory and honour of the church. 'All scripture is' indeed 'given by inspiration of God,' and is the revelation of his love and mercy, springing from the self devotion and sacrifice of his beloved Son. But wherever our mother tongue prevails; Is it now 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?' To the church under God belongs the glory and the praise. The bible we read; the bible we love, is the translation of churchmen. To a numerous body of our divines was committed the high honour and distinguished trust of clothing the word of God in an English dress, of rendering it accessible to the common people, and enabling them to judge for themselves, what were the true doctrines of the cross, the precepts and institutions of the gospel.

And was this performed long after the reformation, in the reign and at the instance of the first James, a monarch pertinaciously attached to our episcopal system of government and articles of faith, and by the labours of men alike persuaded in their minds, and zealous in their affection? Was it performed in a manner that has justly challenged the applause and admiration of the world; that has extorted the eulogium of criticks, and commanded the approbation of theologians, for the perspicuity of its style, and the fidelity with which it has conveyed the sense of the original? Was it so performed, as to supersede all prior, and obviate the necessity of all subsequent, translations; so performed, as to be still retained, not only by us, but by all the orthodox denominations? Oh! tell me no more of the little, that the church has done for the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the everlasting welfare of souls. This single work, had she no other to adorn her history, gives her a transcendent claim upon the gratitude and affection of the people, that now lift up their voice against her; that deride her piety, and scorn her holy things.

But for her, they might have been to this very hour destitute of an authorized version of the scriptures ; one, in which they could confide, as containing all the words of this life. She alone has supplied them. She has given them the bible, they both read and circulate ; and has thus been instrumental in training up amongst them more precious souls for the heavenly world, than all other instruments which God, in his wisdom and goodness, has condescended to employ. Let them think of this, while they look over its pages ; let them think of it, when they return thanks to Him, for this powerful mean of converting grace ; and let them cease to rail ; let them indulge a more charitable spirit towards the descendants of those highly gifted men ; descendants, that have imbibed their spirit, and preserved alive and unimpaired the pure doctrines, institutions, and worship of the church, to which they were so ardently attached.

And here, brethren, you must be sensible, that the time would fail me were I to enumerate the long, long list of worthies, who have graced her annals, and elevated her to the highest pinnacle of sacred fame. Where are they, that have excelled her divines in the true interpretation of the scriptures, and furnished such practical comments upon them ? That have composed such masterly treatises in their defence, and foiled all the arguments of the infidel ? That have written so wisely and well upon the doctrinal truths, and preceptive duties of Christianity ? That have expended more time, and talents, and treasures, in spreading abroad the knowledge of God ; in founding and patronising institutions subservient to the interests, and conformable to the genius of our religion ? Far be it from me to withhold the humble tribute of my praise from the wise and good, who have flourished among other denominations, and contributed to enlighten the world, by their mental and spiritual labours. I am rather disposed to love them for their works' sake, and to cherish the memory of their learning and piety, with the profoundest esteem.

But when the character of our church is impugned, and the tendency of her principles and practice more than called in question ; when she is violently denounced, and

the lamp of her salvation is sought to be extinguished ; it would be base and criminal to be silent ; it would be to admit the verity of the foulest charges, were I not to advert to the productions of our theologians, and challenge all other churches to compare with them, in the number and excellency of their writings.

Go to the largest publick libraries of our opponents, and the candid among them will not hesitate to acknowledge, that, with comparatively few exceptions, the standard authors and luminaries of the religious world, from the peerless Taylor to the giant mind of Horsley, were bred up in the bosom of the church. Go to their private collections, and from the folios of Scott to the tracts of Richmond, they are principally derived from the same source.

And is a church thus justified of her children, thus virtually admitted to have ably defended, and piously enforced the truth as it is in Jesus ; is she to be traduced by the pen, and especially by the tongue of calumny without one effort to exhibit her actual character, and maintain her substantial claims, upon the confidence and affection of an abused and misguided community ? God forbid ! Forbid it, righteous heaven ! that so great a calamity should ever befall the vine, which the right hand of Christ hath planted ; which the apostles and innumerable martyrs have watered with their blood ; and that only requires to be known, in order to command the esteem and veneration of the West.

Next to the glory of God, the triumph of Christ, and the salvation of all, there is no prayer, which I more cordially present before the throne of grace, than the prayer that our church might be universally and thoroughly investigated ; that she might be subjected to the severest scrutiny ; and be made to pass through the most fiery ordeal. I would keep nothing back. I would have her fathomed to the bottom, and in all things rendered visible as the sun. If she cannot endure the refiner's fire ; if, when refined as silver is refined, and tried as gold is tried, she does not come out pure and without alloy, in all the essentials and requirements of a true faith, and a holy obedience ; then am I content, that her altars shall be



trodden down, and her glory given to another; another, that shall prove more trustworthy; more closely identified with the apostolick church; more scriptural in every thing we are commanded to believe and obey.

With these preparatory remarks, I proceed to the examination of her doctrines; those evangelical doctrines, which are of the greatest moment, and upon which I have reason to believe that the largest amount of misapprehension exists. These are to be gained from the received articles of her faith. Articles, that were first published in England, by Edward the sixth; that were there finally revised and established, by a convocation of the clergy, in the year fifteen hundred and seventy one, during the reign of Elizabeth; and that, after the revolution, which wrested our country from the yoke of Britain, were adopted by us, with no other alterations than such as accommodated them, in a political point of view, to the genius of a republican government. Many of them it will not be necessary to notice, either because they have already passed in review, or are devoted to subjects upon which we have been permitted to escape, without serious imputations upon our principles and professions.

Our belief, for example, in the catholick doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, has never been questioned. It is solemnly repeated every sabbath, and the language of our first article is thus clear and determinate; 'There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead, there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.'

Our views of the divinity and humanity of Christ are not impugned. 'The Son, which is the word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed virgin, of her substance: So that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man.'

Our reception of the inspired volume has not been denied. 'Holy scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: So that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy scripture, we do understand those canonical books of the old and new testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the church.'

We are even allowed, upon the great doctrines of the cross, to have expressed our belief, in terms sufficiently explicit and orthodox. But, then, we are accused of entertaining them, with certain mental reservations, and of harbouring, in reality, sentiments materially unsound, and variant from the recorded letter. So far as personally concerned, I do not scruple to repel the calumny with the indignation it deserves. I do most sincerely and heartily subscribe to all the articles of religion embraced by the church. I have no cause to make, nor have I any confidence in, such secret compromises with the conscience; but freely and unreservedly do I believe every one of those articles, in their plain and literal acceptation. As to others, if there be an exception, in the case of any of our clergy in these United States, it is entirely unknown to me. Our accusers are better informed, and let them substantiate their charges by proof, and not by random assertion.

To descend to particulars. No one doctrine of the scriptures is more important, or necessary to be received, than the fall of man from the state of primitive innocence, with the consequent corruption of all his moral powers, and the transmission of that corruption to his entire posterity. And what is clearly revealed in the scriptures, the church as clearly maintains. These are her words; 'Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is VERY FAR GONE from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the

spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek, *φρονεμα σαρκος*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin.'

And among our orthodox fellow Christians, who is there to object to this open and undisguised avowal of what it deeply concerns our fallen and guilty race to understand? Some of their number, I am aware, would prefer to substitute 'total depravity,' for the expression 'very far gone from original righteousness.' But such as accommodated may be estimated from the colour, to the genius of a religion, involve the infant soul, at its birth, them it will not be necessary have already passed in graded and polluted with the spots upon which we have Whereas, with these interesting lectures of serious imputations upon of a negative quality, and indeed serious imputations upon natural holiness. Sin is in the catholic doctrine of the it is sleeping on a congenial couch, questioned. It is so active and refreshed, as a giant in the language of our the first perceptions of the mind, and the language of our cities of the flesh; obtaining an ascendancy; 'There is but to the failure of the instituted counteraction, without body, parts, obstinacy, with which the strivings of man, and goodness; are resisted and withstood. both visible and

To support me in these views, I have three things: there be three common sense, assuring me that infants are in unity; the Father actual trespasses; I have the testimony of the Father of Christ are convincing me that sins unknown to them, of the Father blackest turpitude, are the work of man's matured very and I have the testimony of Jesus Christ, declaring that man's of us, 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of man's stance: as a little child, he shall not enter therein.' All with the utterly irreconcilable with total depravity, and enough to deter me from adopting that most unnatural and unwarrantable phrase.

Still, however, it must not be concealed, that there is no inborn health in us; that we are naturally inclined to evil; and that, left to ourselves, we could only forge new links to the chain, which fastens us to the chariot wheels of sin. Whoever thinks otherwise; whoever preaches otherwise, knows little of himself, little of his fellow men, and still less of the gospel. He may amuse his hearers with beautiful delineations of the innocence and the dignity of their nature; but having relinquished the most powerful motive for their reliance upon the Rock of Ages, he will be apt to inspire them with a degree of self-confidence, visionary and fatal in the extreme. He will certainly impute falsehood to David where he says, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.' He will flatly contradict the apostle, where he feelingly concerned, I do not scruple to know that in me (that is, in my indignation) it deserves. I sing: for to will is present with subscribe to all the articles that which is good I find not. church. I have no cause, I do not; but the evil which I dence in, such secret confession, if I do that I would not, it is but freely that unreservedly in that DWELLETH in me. I find those a LAW, till their plan would do good, SIN is PRESENT other me.' While, therefore, we renounce the idea of total cleravity, as absurdly applied to any other beings, than me devil and his angels, we cordially agree with the stant in the belief, that 'man is very far gone from a natural righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to all the evil that is in the world.' At the flesh lusteth always contrary to the the fall of man, God our adversaries assert what they please, upon the fall of man, preach, and upon this warn every hearer the consequence and indispensable necessity of a radical transmissione heart and its affections.

what is el do we warn EVERY hearer? Why urge upon clearly mty of becoming faithful, and penitent, and holy? standeth use we believe with the church, that 'the offer-do vair Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, pronatton, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; which she describes to be 'the one oblation,' and avers, that 'there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone.' It is because, dis-

carding all metaphysical subtleties, we give the only just and natural construction to such inspired declarations as these; 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto ALL MEN.' 'As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon ALL MEN unto justification of life.' 'The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one DIED for ALL, then were all dead.' 'We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should TASTE DEATH FOR EVERY MAN.' 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that ANY should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance.' 'The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth ALL MEN every where to repent.' 'This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have ALL MEN to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself A RANSOM FOR ALL, to be testified in due time.'

Yes, brethren, such is our creed, such the support it obtains from the scriptures, and although the limits I have prescribed to myself will not permit me to embark in the full discussion of its merits, a brief statement of the opposite doctrine will disclose a system of faith, from which your minds must recoil with abhorrence, and at the same time coincide with me, in pronouncing it to be an outrageous libel upon the true character of God, and the mission of Christ.

Contrary, then, to the article of our church, which asserts, that this gracious Being made a 'perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual;' it is maintained, as the first principle in the Calvinistick creed, that his atonement was partial and particular; that it only embraced the sins of a portion of the human race, while those of the residue of their fellow-creatures have neither been atoned for, nor



themselves placed in a situation, wherein it is possible to partake of the mercy of God.

In his preliminary discourse to a free translation of Zanchius, the doctrine is thus exhibited by Toplady: 'As God did not will that each individual of mankind should be saved; so neither did he will that Christ should properly and immediately die for each individual of mankind. Whence it follows that though the blood of Christ, from its own intrinsick dignity, was sufficient for the redemption of all men; yet, in consequence of his Father's appointment, he shed it intentionally, and therefore effectually and immediately, **FOR THE ELECT ONLY.** This is self-evident. God, as we have before proved, wills not the salvation of every man; but he gave his Son to die for them whose salvation he willed; therefore his Son did not die for every man. All those, for whom Christ died, are saved; and the divine justice indispensably requires, that to them the benefits of his death should be imparted: But only the elect are saved; they only partake of those benefits; consequently, **FOR THEM ONLY HE DIED AND INTERCEDES.**'

The pen almost refuses to transcribe an opinion, so diametrically at war with the scriptures, and so inconsistent with their proverbial invitations to all sinners to repent, to believe, and to obey. If the preceding texts were not sufficient, it is contradicted in terms by St. Peter: 'There shall be false teachers among you, who shall privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that **BOUGHT THEM**, and bring upon themselves swift **DESTRUCTION.**' Also by St. Paul: '**DESTROY** not him with thy meat for whom Christ **DIED**;' and again, where his remonstrance, upon the subject of meats offered to idols, turns upon the fact expressed in these words: 'Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother **PERISH**, for **WHOM** Christ **DIED.**'

Nothing, then, can be more evident than the final destruction from the presence of the Lord of many, whose sins were completely atoned for, by the death and sacrifice of the Lamb of God. And yet, upon the foundation of a partial atonement, or particular redemption of the elect, and the elect alone, is built the whole theory of election

and reprobation. I will give it to you in the words of Calvin: 'Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which he hath determined in himself, what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated either to life or to death.'

It is impossible, brethren, for any language to be easier of comprehension, and if true, our future destiny was unalterably fixed, before the worlds were made. Some of us were created for the express purpose of being saved, and some of us for the express purpose of being damned. And that I am not putting a false construction upon the extract from Calvin, whether it regards the one class or the other, will be apparent from the testimony borne by several of his followers.

In relation to the elect, and the certainty of their salvation, Coles, on the sovereignty of God, remarks, 'As it was not any loveliness in elect persons which moved God to love them at first, so neither shall their unlovely backslidings deprive them of it.' He also asks the question, 'Suppose a believer to be taken away in his sin, as perhaps Josiah was, and hath not time to repent of it?' And then, in a second reply, with the view of sustaining his integrity, the following preposterous doctrine is advanced: 'There was that in him that would have repented, and God reckons of a man according to what he would do.'

The celebrated preacher, Rowland Hill, assures us, that 'David stood as completely justified in the everlasting righteousness of Christ, at the time when he caused Uriah to be murdered, and was committing adultery with his wife, as he was in any part of his life. For all the sins of the elect, be they more, or be they less, be they past, present, or to come, were forever done away. So that every one of these elect stand spotless in the sight of God.'

The same principle is espoused in the spiritual treasury of Mason, an author highly esteemed among the writers

of his class. He even adopts expressions yet more extraordinary and reprehensible: 'Though a believer be black as hell, polluted with guilt, defiled with sin, yet in Christ, he is all fair, without a spot; free from sin, as viewed by God in Christ, fully reconciled to God, and standing without trespasses before him.' As I have not, however, been able to find these sentiments in the American edition of Mason, I conclude that an expurgation has been deemed prudent; but they appear in that, published in London, by Romaine.

But the boldest champion of antinomianism was the English puritan, Tobias Crisp. I cannot conceive of more detestable doctrine than that contained in the following quotations: 'The Lord hath no more to lay to the charge of an elect person, yet in the height of iniquity, and in the excess of riot, and committing all the abominations that can be committed; I say even then, when an elect person runs such a course, the Lord hath no more to lay to that person's charge, than God hath to lay to the charge of a believer; nay, God hath no more to lay to the charge of such a person, than he hath to lay to the charge of a saint triumphant in glory.' Such is his opinion of the unconverted elect in Christ; and now for the converted. 'Suppose a member of Christ, a freeman of Christ, should happen to fall not only by a failing or slip, but also by a gross failing, a heavy failing, nay a scandalous falling into sin; Christ, making a person free, doth disannul, frustrate, and make void, every curse and sentence that is in the law, against such a transgressor; that this member of Christ is no more under the curse when he hath transgressed, than he was before he transgressed. This I say, Christ hath conveyed him beyond the reach of the curse; it concerns him no more than if he had never transgressed. Therefore let me tell you, in a word, if ye be freemen of Christ, you may esteem all the curses of the law, as no more concerning you than the laws of England do concern Spain, or the laws of Turkey an Englishman, with whom they have nothing to do. I do not say the law is absolutely abolished, but it is abolished in respect to the curse of it, to every person that is a freeman of Christ. So,

though such a man do sin, the law hath no more to say to him, than if he had not sinned.'

Such, then, brethren, according to these men, may be the character of the elect of God, without in the smallest degree impairing their right and title to look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and no less strongly, decidedly, and unconditionally are the reprobate consigned to everlasting perdition.

Zanchius, the Swiss reformer, declares, that 'the reprobate are bound by the ordinance of God under the necessity of sinning;' and Beza, his countryman, that 'God hath predestinated, not only unto damnation, but also unto the causes of it, whomsoever he saw meet.'

Calvin himself pronounces of this benevolent Being, and of his designs in relation to sinners, 'He directs his voice to them, but it is that they may become more deaf; he kindles a light, but it is that they may be more blind; he publishes his doctrine, but it is that they may be made more besotted; he applies a remedy, but it is that they may not be healed.' To the same purport is the language of the celebrated Peter Martyr, describing the Deity in this manner: 'He supplies wicked men with opportunities of sinning, and inclines their hearts thereto. He blinds, deceives, and seduces them. He, by his working on their hearts, bends and stirs them up to do evil.'

Perkins, an old English divine, affirms, that 'God hath most justly decreed even the wicked works of the wicked;' and Knox, the Scotch reformer, that 'the wicked are not only left by God's suffering, but are compelled to sin by his power.' Even our New England divines, in sixteen hundred and eighty, could incorporate, in their printed confession of faith, similar strange and perverse declarations. 'These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, (some to everlasting life and others to everlasting death,) are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.' 'As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous judge, for former sins doth blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlight-

ened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasions of sin; and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.'

I shall conclude with Toplady, before quoted, the most renowned of all the modern advocates of Calvinism, and one of the few of that description in the church of England. 'God often lets the wicked go on to more ungodliness; which he does negatively, by withholding that grace which alone can restrain them from evil.' 'God, occasionally, in the course of his providence, puts both elect and reprobate persons into circumstances of temptation, by which temptation are meant, not only those trials that are of an outward afflictive nature; but those, also, that are inward and spiritual: Even such as shall cause the persons so tempted, actually to turn aside from the path of duty to commit sin, and involve both themselves and others in evil.' 'If between the elect and reprobate there was not a great gulf fixed, so that neither can be otherwise than they are; then the will of God (which is the alone cause why some are chosen and others not) would be rendered inefficacious, and of no effect. Nor could the justice of God stand, if he was to condemn the elect, for whose sins he has received ample satisfaction at the hand of Christ; or if he was to save the reprobate, who are not interested in Christ as the elect are.' 'Some men were, from all eternity, not only negatively excepted from a participation of Christ and salvation; but positively ordained to continue in their natural blindness, hardness of heart, &c., and that by the just judgment of God.' 'The non-elect were predestinated, not only to continue in final impenitency, sin, and unbelief; but were, likewise, for such their sins, righteously appointed to infernal death hereafter.' 'The sentence of God, which rejects the reprobates, is so fixed and immutable, that it is impossible



they should be saved, though they have performed all the works of the saints ; and, therefore, it is not true that those who perish through their own fault might have been saved through grace, if they had not ceased labouring for saving grace.'

How disgusting the features, how dreadful the portrait, I have here felt myself compelled to exhibit from the writings of men, with one or two exceptions, the principal leaders and promoters in the ranks of schism. They remind me of the observation of Erasmus, the most learned of those who flourished at the period of the reformation : ' This new gospel, founded upon the doctrine of absolute decrees, has produced a new generation of obstinate, impudent, hypocritical people, who are revilers, liars, deceivers ; and who do not agree among themselves, and are very uneasy to others ; who are seditious, furious, given to cavilling ; and with whom I am so much dissatisfied, that if I knew any town where none of them were, I would go thither, and choose to live in it.' They remind me of what was long since declared, by bishop Seabury of our own American church, when exposing the prominent error of Calvinism : ' All objects are said to appear yellow to the jaundiced eye. Predestination is to the mind what the jaundice is to the body. The whole bible appears tinged with a sickly, yellow hue, when the predestinarian looks into it, especially if he be of a morose and vindictive temper, as most commonly is the case. To see God consigning the greater part of mankind to eternal misery, in consequence of his own arbitrary decree, just to show that he can do it and will do it, for the glory of his justice, as they call it, seems to be congenial and grateful to his heart ; and in truth the consequences of this doctrine, carried to its full extent, however the abettors of it may not own or see them, represent Almighty God, the God of goodness and love, to whom be glory forever, in a more unamiable light than it is possible for human wit to represent the devil.'

I feel myself, therefore, brethren, fully authorized to repeat, that you cannot but coincide with me, in pro-

nouncing it to be an outrageous libel upon the true character of God and the mission of Christ. The naked recital of such a system is all that is requisite to ensure its rejection, wherever the mind is unprejudiced, and reason is suffered calmly and dispassionately to investigate the oracles of truth. They afford it no countenance, and the seventeenth article of the church will hereafter be found to be equally free from the imputation.

Is it, then, for refusing to adopt a theory so grossly absurd, and even detestable, when expounded by its most zealous partisans, is it for this, that the great body of our clergy are accused of lukewarmness in the cause of their Redeemer, if a Redeemer they have? Long may they give occasion to endure the reproach. Long may they present our heavenly Father and the Son of his love in a more inviting and encouraging aspect to the minds and consciences of sinners. Not one of you, brethren, shall hereafter perish through any arbitrary, irrespective, and irreversible decree; not one of you, because your eternal life was never purchased by a Saviour's all-atoning blood. But if ye perish, the fault will be your own; the awful catastrophe will be owing to your own perverse refusal to believe and obey the words of eternal life.

And may these considerations stimulate you to new and more vigorous efforts to make your calling and election sure. If ye will but permit your faith to be active, your repentance to be genuine, and your obedience perfect, not all the preposterous opinions of men will avail to exclude you from the mansions of everlasting felicity. But by his Spirit working in due season, the very God of peace will sanctify you wholly; he will lift up the light of his reconciled countenance upon you, and finally, for Christ's sake, admit you into the presence of his exceeding glory.

**AMEN.**

## SERMON XV.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

THERE are few topicks in divinity less understood than that of predestination. It is owing to the strange conceits and metaphysical species of dialecticks which have usurped the name, and transformed the pure, intelligible doctrine of the scriptures into a hideous monster of deformity, odious to the eye, and revolting to the mind and heart. I gave you some specimens of this character upon the recent sabbath, and am confident that no rational being, if left to the free and unrestrained exercise of his own faculties and judgment, would permit himself to be deluded by a system so derogatory to the goodness, and subversive of the justice of the Deity.

To make men for the sole object of damning them everlastingly! To impute such a motive to the benignant Being who presides over the universe, and whose tender mercies are represented to be over all his works! The act itself is shocking to our moral feelings, and the imputation, if it had never been hazarded by men of piety and learning; if it had now for the first time been submitted to our examination, would be universally denounced as impious and even blasphemous to the last degree. It would be considered a new edition of those mythological crudities, which invested the heathen gods and goddesses with the most ferocious and vindictive passions; which made the earth the beleaguered object of their tyranny, and the bodies and souls of men the hapless victims of their unrelenting malice.

Never would it be tolerated, that our heavenly Father was capable of forming and publishing a decree so despot-

ick and unjust, so repugnant to the perfections with which the bible delights to encircle him, and so hostile to the best and dearest interests of a large proportion of our race. But the true scriptural doctrine would be unanimously embraced. Predestination would be presented and received in its more attractive, and only authentick form. That it does exist in the sacred volume cannot be seriously denied ; but, then, as dissimilar to the refined absurdities of Calvin as light is dissimilar to darkness, and truth to falsehood.

For what if God is there said to have predetermined the fate of every man ? It is not with reference to persons, but to their characters. It is not by a capricious creation or selection of a certain number to be saved, and a certain number to be damned. But from everlasting the decree hath gone forth ; from everlasting to everlasting, it hath been ordained, that the righteous shall hereafter be supremely blessed, and the unrighteous supremely miserable. And is not this materially variant from determining as to the persons, who shall be irresistibly constrained to become the one and the other ?

When human laws describe offences, and, for their prevention, impose an adequate penalty to be visited on the guilty ; Does this compel you to commit them ? Are any selected from the mass of their fellow citizens, and by the statutes of the land invincibly coerced to the perpetration of robbery, of arson, of murder ? Under such circumstances, I am sure you would find none to condemn them, as criminals ; no judge or jury to pronounce them justly amenable to the severity of penal inflictions. They must rather have first occupied the attitude of free agents. Obedience and disobedience, with the respective consequences, must have been fairly set before them, and then, if they voluntarily transgress, the laws, enacted for the punishment of all transgressors, would have personal application to each individual robber, incendiary. or murderer.

And precisely thus with the decrees of God : He requires of all men to be righteous. He tells them in what righteousness consists. He promises his divine assistance in enabling them to obtain it ; and as an inducement to

ardent and persevering exertions on their part, he has decreed, in case of cheerful obedience, to give them the blessing of life eternal. He also demands of them to abstain from all unrighteousness. He explains its nature. He assures them of his inclination to bestow upon them power to triumph over it; and, as a motive to operate upon their minds and consciences, he has decreed, in case of disobedience, to consign them over to the vengeance of eternal fire.

Yes, brethren, these are the decrees or laws of God; the eternal purposes he has entertained and proclaimed, in relation to the present conduct and future destiny of all mankind. They admit of free agency. They constitute a fair, undisguised, and impartial system of jurisprudence. They convince us, that instead of being controlled, by a secret and unavoidable fatality, to become either righteous or unrighteous, we are to a certain extent the arbiters of our own condition, both in time and in eternity. Religion and irreligion are at our own option. If we embrace the former, it will be the life, if the latter, it will be the death, of our souls. There is no such thing as original celestial love for the person of one man, and hatred for that of another. Character is here every thing. Righteousness and unrighteousness, obedience and disobedience, these alone are the objects of the divine decrees. After what Christ has achieved, in reconciling the world to God, through these are the faithful to be rewarded, and the unfaithful punished, at the judgment of the great day.

If a different doctrine from this is to be found in our seventeenth article, I have not the sagacity to detect it. Not one syllable does it contain of individual reprobation or preterition, although inseparably connected with unconditional election, in the opinion of Calvin and his followers. 'Predestination to life is,' indeed, declared to be 'the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed, by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation, those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.'



But here is nothing discrepant from my sentiments; nothing that the clergy of the church are indisposed to maintain. Never do they deny, that 'the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things.' That godly consideration this article concisely asserts. But none of the renewed in their minds can find it full of 'sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort,' to think that the wicked are only created to be damned. The entire article must, consequently, be guiltless of a theory, that would involve so flagrant a perversion of the benevolent spirit of the gospel; while no Christians, in their senses, will object to the predestination, which, founded upon the word of righteousness, entirely harmonizes with all their hopes and expectations, 'as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God;' Which, indeed, assures them of their final acceptance with him, not from any capricious exercise of omnipotent power, but from the fact of their having fully and cordially closed with the overtures made them through Christ. 'Wherefore,' as the article before recites of those converted by his saving grace, 'wherefore they, which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works: and at length by God's mercy they attain to everlasting felicity.'

And let me tell you, brethren, that every man, placed within the sound of the gospel, is 'called according to God's purpose working in due season;' although it is but too evident, that many refuse to obey. Whoever does, the article pronounces predestined to eternal life, and I ask for no more consoling doctrine. I perceive that the pre-

destination of the bible and the predestination of the church are in perfect concord. So little sympathy has she for the monstrous absurdity of making our Father in heaven create immortal souls, merely to evince his power and determination to punish them everlastingly from his presence, as to declare, that 'for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.' So clearly does she coincide with the views I am desirous to inculcate, as to affirm, that 'we must receive God's promises in such wise as they be generally set forth to us in holy scripture: And in our doings, that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God.'

All which is manifestly inconsistent with decrees of election and reprobation, ordained without foresight of obedience on the one hand, or of disobedience on the other. Since those promises are directed to all who believe and repent, and the divine Being is 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' The followers of Calvin may, therefore, continue to determine, that 'the decrees were not formed in consequence of any FORESIGHT of sin, or holiness, in the reprobate or elect:' Our Zion will not so determine, will not so positively circumscribe the goodness and mercy of God, as to defeat the voluntary co-operation of man in the work of his salvation, and to render numbers of our race incapable of acquiring that sincere faith and holy obedience, which bring the Christian within the covenant of grace, and the predestination of the godly to life eternal. She advances a doctrine more analogous to common sense, more respectful to the attributes of the Deity, more illustrative of the extent of his benevolence, and more conformable to what the apostle Peter proclaimed to the strangers, enumerated in his first epistle, that they were 'elect according to the FOREKNOWLEDGE of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto OBEDIENCE and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.'

Here, however, I am told, that the foreknowledge of the Deity is in effect precisely the same with his predestination; in other words, that what he foreknows must as certainly come to pass, as what he predestines. But allow me to assure you, that no opinion can be more unfounded. It entirely destroys the necessity of a superintending Providence, interfering with, and regulating, the affairs of men; it engages us in a vain and fallacious service, when we return thanks to God, for having saved our lives from destruction, in the hour of impending danger; and it contradicts a very plain and explicit narrative recorded in the twenty third chapter of the first book of Samuel. Keilah, a town besieged by the Philistines, was rescued from their grasp by David, acting under the immediate direction of God. 'And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him: and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. Then said David, O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? Will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the Lord said, HE WILL COME DOWN. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, THEY WILL DELIVER THEE UP. Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and DEPARTED out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul, that David was escaped from Keilah; and HE FORBARE TO GO FORTH.'

Here, then, you perceive a wide distinction between the foreknowledge and the predestination of events. To the inquiries of David, concerning Saul and the people of Keilah, the answers of God were positive and direct: 'HE WILL COME DOWN;' 'THEY WILL DELIVER THEE UP.' And

will you undertake to assert, that they proceeded not from an attribute purely divine? Will you deny, that the prescience of God enabled him to reveal the intended enterprise of Saul, and the course which would be pursued by the ungrateful inhabitants, provided their town was invested, an enterprise directed against Keilah, and a course fatal to the liberty, and the life, of David?

Surely, brethren, unless you are disposed to think that the immaculate Jehovah may sometimes trifle with his dependant creatures, may sometimes delight to render them the miserable dupes of a capricious and unfounded revelation, you must believe, that these replies had their foundation in the FOREKNOWLEDGE of God, and, at the same time, deem it totally inconsistent with his veracity to communicate as forthcoming events, what he had previously determined from all eternity never should transpire. Nor can you fail to remark, in this gracious dispensation, such an interposing providence, as penetrates and overrules the designs of men, in pursuance of a settled system of moral government; and such a display of divine FORESIGHT, as had not the remotest connexion with PRE-EXISTING DECREES, because the very circumstances unfolded never occurred: Saul forbore to go forth, and the men of Keilah did not betray their guest and deliverer, because he availed himself of the disclosures of the Deity to frustrate the malignity of his open, and the treachery of his secret, foes.

What, then, becomes of the supposed identity of foreknowledge, with predestination? That which is DECREED by God must necessarily COME TO PASS. What becomes of another doctrine of the same school, insisting that God only foreknows, because he has previously predestined? A relation of facts is here recorded, absolutely incompatible with such priority. In vain does Toplady contend, 'his decrees are the foundation of his prescience.' For, were it true, how could the Almighty have declared, without any reservation whatever, 'HE WILL COME DOWN;' 'THEY WILL DELIVER THEE UP;' when he must certainly have known, in virtue of his own ETERNAL DECREE, that such incidents could not possibly ensue? But if foresight

in him is not the consequent of preordination ; if mankind are, indeed, left to act in a state of probation, according to impressions made upon their minds by external objects, and in compliance with their own volition ; then, can we easily comprehend, that the Omniscient, foreseeing the designs of David's enemies, and applied to in the way he had himself prescribed, might providentially interfere to advise him of his danger, revealing what would inevitably follow, if he remained in Keilah, and leaving it to his own discretion to adopt such measures as the exigency required. Hence the safety of the future monarch of Israel, and hence this plain, unvarnished scripture, that, more valuable than volumes of metaphysical disquisitions, clearly falsifies the groundwork of a chimerical theory, in language too intelligible to be misunderstood, too obvious to be easily tortured in subserviency to that fatal necessity, which first fetters its victim with an irreversible destiny, and then condemns him for transgressions he could not avoid.

Nor can the doctrine of absolute, unconditional predestination be fairly deduced from any part of the sacred volume. It is true that many passages have been plausibly enlisted in its support ; but, as far the larger number of able divines apprehend, without any adequate reason for the interpretation given them. Thus, for example, the acknowledgment, ' Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,' is often adduced in favour of arbitrary election and reprobation, when a candid examination ought to convince us, that this discrimination related exclusively to the line of conveyance, through which the promised seed was to descend. In which sense, Jacob was selected to the prejudice of Esau, and, in the emphatick language of the scriptures, it is well said, that the one was loved, and the other hated. So also, Abraham was loved in preference to Nahor, Isaac to Ishmael, Judah to Reuben, and so on to the virgin Mary, who was loved, and all other women hated, inasmuch as she was chosen to be the mother of Christ, and they were all superseded. A construction that is amply confirmed by the observation of our Saviour to his followers, ' If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and



mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' For, if the explanation which has been given to the expression, 'Esau have I hated,' be not correct, the authority of Jesus may be drawn to vindicate the basest, vilest feelings the human heart is capable of entertaining, and this in direct contradiction to the well known averment, 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer;' and to various other passages inculcating parental, filial, fraternal, and connubial love. While, upon the supposition of its accuracy, the requisition of our Lord is perfectly intelligible, and strictly conformable to what he has elsewhere said: 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.'

I have here examined the account of Jacob and Esau's relative situation in the favour of God, not because it is more readily and satisfactorily explained, than other texts brought to verify the dogma of irrespective decrees: but because, upon a cursory perusal, it is perhaps most likely to create erroneous impressions with those that are either disinclined or unable to interpret scripture by scripture. Did my limits permit, to demonstrate that the epistles of Paul are equally free from these modern speculations, or rather revived reveries of Augustine, would not be the less feasible or conclusive. The election of the apostle has an undoubted reference to the admission of the Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel, on its rejection by the Jews: who, from being a chosen and peculiar people, were, by their spontaneous renunciation of the blessed Jesus, deprived of the enviable distinction, in order to share its benefits with the despised posterity of Esau, in due time, breaking the spiritual yoke of Jacob from their necks, and so far recovering the birthright of their ancestor, as to inherit alike the promises made unto Abraham. In this point of view, the Jews as a nation were once the elect of God, and are so described, when multitudes of their number were wholly destitute of divine and saving grace; and, in this point of view, the Gentiles have succeeded to be the elect of God, when it is to be feared scarcely a less

proportion are sadly unconscious of the inestimable benefits they enjoy; and whose condemnation will unquestionably be the more disastrous, from the very circumstance of their election to a knowledge of Christ being insufficient to put 'a new spirit' within them, to 'take away the stony heart out of' their flesh, and give them 'a heart of flesh.'

How idle, then, to convert national into individual dispensations; and from the election of the great body of the Gentiles to infer that of private persons. Even the rapid glance I have taken must convince you of the absence of all scriptural evidence in its favour, and nothing is more certain than the destructive, demoralizing consequences attending the belief of a divine and unchangeable foreordination of whatsoever comes to pass.

With those who have already obtained the one thing needful; who are truly born again and confederate with the spirit of Christ, it may not have a very injurious tendency. So long as the perfection of reason remains a desideratum, many untenable hypotheses will continue to be framed, where there is no sympathy for vice or irreligion, and that, when sincerely entertained, it becomes us to expose, without impeaching the practical faith and holiness of their defenders. More than this, it would, however, be criminal to concede. For when the circulation of error, even under the most honest convictions of its truth, is known to be followed by calamitous effects to the world of sinners; it is the duty of all, who minister in holy things, to investigate, not so much the motives which give it currency, as the validity of its claims upon human credence. They may, and they should, caution a fellow labourer to beware how he propagates a doctrine, which the earliest Christians never thought of, and which innumerable theologians have treated, as a false induction from a few insulated texts, not happily compared with the general scope of the inspired writings. And yet, they must mainly importune the sinner to beware how he receives for truth a system of predestination, that, being utterly subversive of free agency, destroys effectually the doctrine of accountability, with the personal morality and immorality of all our actions.

I know that this is a corollary warmly denied by its supporters; but it is a denial that they cannot sustain by any successful appeal to reason, any successful effort to reconcile as glaring a paradox as was ever seriously advanced. Here they acknowledge their inability, and did this merely arise from the incomprehensibility of the subject, because, like the divine nature, it is transcendental, in other words, above our intellectual ken, it would form no insurmountable obstacle to its reception. But when it absolutely contradicts every admitted principle of ratiocination, every semblance of probability, and even of possibility, there can be no danger in renouncing it, as a creed, that never was, and never will be, applied to any valuable or practical purpose.

It may, indeed, often imbolden the sinner to linger in his headlong career to destruction. To him, it may prove an emollient, temporary balm; it may cicatrize the wounds of his conscience, to be persuaded, that his guilty conduct results from a fatal and uncontrollable necessity. But happily for all truly pious men, they never rely upon a personal decree of election, as if it could justify their avoidance of a sober, righteous, and godly life. They rather prefer to be 'followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' It is, in this manner, that they exhibit their saving knowledge of Christ, and it is thus that every unsanctified predestinarian must eventually believe and obey, or he will never be welcomed into the blissful presence of Him, 'who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.'

And if no respect of persons, brethren, if the unpromising language of the scriptures be, 'Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law

shall be justified ;' then, as I before remarked, he must look altogether to character ; he can accept no man's person ; upon character, he must predicate his decrees ; and upon character, growing out of free choice, and not irresistible fate, award the respective issues of eternity. Such is the doctrine of the bible. Such is the doctrine which the church prefers to the gloomy opinions of the French reformer. And if for this she is to be traduced, the universal diffusion of the truth can alone relieve her from the envenomed tongue of calumny. Her sentiments will not be surrendered. Like the holy oracles from which they are educed, her articles of religion will steadfastly resist all the encroachments of heresy and delusion.

There is, however, one cause of misconception upon this subject, which I must not neglect to notice. A proper line of demarcation is not generally preserved between the peculiarities of Calvin, and those leading doctrines of the cross, which he only maintains in common with the orthodox divines of every age ; and the consequence is, that the church often meets with opposition from persons, who, if better informed, would not withhold from her the tribute of their esteem.

Be it, therefore, remembered, that the peculiarities in question are these : the belief in total depravity ; in partial redemption ; in unconditional election and reprobation ; in irresistible grace and instantaneous conversion ; and in the final, or more correctly, the certain perseverance of the saints ; all of them doctrines unknown to our articles, and that should be carefully distinguished from the radical and essential principles of the gospel, to which every faithful minister is accustomed to take heed, as well to preserve himself, as the souls committed to his care, in all things pertaining to eternal life.

And yet, how often have they been confounded with these last, with sentiments purely evangelical, and revealed from heaven : How often has the ambassador of Christ besought his hearers, and prayed them in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God ; repent ye of your sins ; deplore your natural corruption ; desire of God, in earnest prayer, to change and renew the deadness of your affec-

tions, to infuse into your hearts the faith that worketh by love, and, above all, to purify your souls in the blood of the Lamb, that taketh away the sins of the world: How often has he enforced these topicks with the solemn sanctions of an eternal judgment according to righteousness; and, then, how promptly has he been denounced for his enthusiasm, his fanaticism, his terrourism, and probably with a view to crown the climax of opprobrium, how has he been reviled for his Calvinism.

But what pitiable, what lamentable infatuation is this. To conjure into being some huge misshapen mass of deformity, and mingling with its crudities the blessed religion of Christ, to give the unnatural compound some uncouth and frightful name, and immediately discard it, for a bugbear and a lie. We might as well reject all truth, because it has at times been made to coalesce with error. On such ground, protestants might renounce their Saviour, since his worship is divided with the catholick; Christians abjure their God, since his name and attributes are known and honoured by the Jew.

It should, therefore, be a matter of extreme caution with every man, how he trifles with sacred things, and how he resolves them into the mere speculations of the human mind. Such speculations may be ingenious, and yet false, they may be abstruse and erudite, and yet nothing worth. Universally may they be disowned, without impairing the piety, or endangering the salvation of the soul. But, at the same time, let each individual be sure, that neither passion, nor prejudice, nor ignorance is suffered to triumph over his understanding, to the disparagement of those words of eternal life, which, so far from being exclusively Calvinistick, have been adhered to by the friends of Jesus, from the earliest promulgation of the gospel; those words of eternal life, which the church ever has recognised, and which she never will relinquish, so long as she retains a sanctuary for her children, and a faithful minister to stand at her altar.

She is, indeed, catholick and enlightened in her views of religion, but in nothing does she presume to be more so, than its divine Author; in nothing will she sooner



accommodate herself to the lax principles of some, than to the excessively rigid and austere sentiments of others. But her course is the happy medium pursued by Christ himself; in appearance, simple without baldness, and beautiful without pageantry; in spirit, humble without cant, and grave without hypocrisy; in doctrine, liberal without licentiousness, and tenacious without bigotry. Whoever repairs to her, with other views and prepossessions, must either rescind them, or find no pleasure in her communion. He must walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, or he will obtain no passport from her to the heavenly world.

The preceding remarks must have convinced you, that the melancholy doctrines of arbitrary election and reprobation have no form, nor comeliness, no beauty in her eyes, that she should desire them; and with the divine blessing, I propose, upon the ensuing sabbath, to prove that she is equally pure and free from blemish, in the remaining articles of her faith. And may Almighty God, of his infinite mercy, enable us to discern their truth; and may we be induced to receive them into honest and good hearts; may he grant us capacity to understand, wisdom to improve, and grace to obey; and to Him, the Father, to the Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, shall be ascribed all the glory, and honour, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

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## SERMON XVI.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

HAVING concluded a very brief and cursory survey of the doctrines of the church, in relation to the natural cor-

ruption of man, the extent of Christ's redemption, and the much debated subjects of election and reprobation; I am compelled to prolong the investigation, for the purpose of vindicating 'the salvation thereof,' in some other particulars upon which her opinions are either grossly misunderstood, or designedly misrepresented. Ignorance is unquestionably the principal cause; but then the promotion of a sect, the interests of a party, come in for their full share of productive capital, in the ungracious office of defaming the views she is solicitous to maintain upon the prominent features of the gospel.

It is said, for example, that we entertain a confident persuasion of the inherent capacity of the sinner to work out his own salvation, and that the Holy Spirit is by no means an indispensable agent in the process of conversion. But where our accusers obtain their authority, for a charge so grave and imposing, is to me entirely unknown. If true, it would indeed destroy all our pretensions to the Christian name, and convict us of what the apostles would have boldly pronounced a damnable heresy. We deny it with deserved, and, I trust, with holy, indignation. No more can we advance one single step towards the attainment of the graces of religion, without the assistance of the Spirit of our God, than, deprived of his providential care and protection, we could inspire one breath of air, or move a muscle of the body. But are we here corporeally dependant? So, in the more noble functions and susceptibilities of the soul, we are spiritually dependant; the Holy Ghost is our indispensable guide and director; the purveyor of every good thought, and word, and deed.

Listen to the strong and plenary language of our tenth article: 'The condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God, by Christ preventing,' that is, preceding 'us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.' Does this look like winning Christ and heaven by our own unaided efforts? Can our fellow

Christians present us with a more humble acknowledgment of their reliance upon the divine assistance? Let them produce it; let an inquisition be held, and if it should prove scriptural and orthodox, we will gladly embrace it; we have no objection to the most positive contradiction of mere human ability to choose the good, and refuse the evil.

All that we contend for is this. In the order of nature, God hath given us power to elevate the arm in compliance with our own volition, and, in the order of grace, he has equally bestowed upon us the power to learn his will, and observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded us. Upon no other principle, can we account for the well known remonstrance addressed to the Jewish nation: 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help;' or that yet more severe reprimand, pronounced by our Saviour, against the unbelieving Jews, 'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.' Declarations, which plainly indicate the necessity of human co-operation, in attaining the virtues of the divine life, and as plainly evince that the inclination of God to save is only frustrated by the disinclination of man to obey. Power he gives, capacity he does not withhold, the Spirit is perpetually admonishing us to accept the overtures of redeeming love; but whatever may have been the character of Paul's conversion, the age of miracles has terminated; supernatural coercion is no longer employed. We have it submitted to our personal choice to become penitent, and faithful, and obedient, and, in case of failure, can ascribe it to no other cause than our fatal opposition to the will of heaven. Irresistible grace is an invention of modern times. He that waits for it may as soon calculate upon gathering a redundant harvest from fallow ground. If he does not put forth the best labour of his head and heart, he will only sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.

There is, however, another form, in which the same charge is virtually brought against us. We are accused of disowning the new birth, or rather of limiting it to the external act of baptism. Upon what foundation? Because, in our baptismal offices, immediately after the sacra-

ment is administered, it is said, 'Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate;' and 'these persons are regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church.' But a more illiberal criticism was never offered; a more disingenuous appeal to the prejudices of the uninformed never made. When will the individuals, who seemingly love to misinterpret our language, learn to be candid and magnanimous? How often are we to be required to refute an oft refuted calumny?

If there were the slightest real cause for its circulation, there would be no applause from the Christian world, which they might not justly challenge, for their unremitting assiduity in decrying a church capable of countenancing so gross a fallacy, as to identify the shadow with the substance of religion; as to confound the outward and visible sign, with the inward and spiritual grace, of holy baptism. But no such thing; we maintain no such fallacy. Earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, we rather insist upon the absolute necessity of being spiritually born again, in order to our acceptance with God, and ultimate enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven. In applying the word 'REGENERATE' to the baptized, we are indeed justified by the authority of Paul, who speaks of the outward symbol, as 'the washing of regeneration,' and the inward grace, as the 'renewing of the Holy Ghost.' And when infants are thus brought to Christ, its reception implies a change of state, a transmission from the world into his kingdom; when adults present themselves, we are bound to believe, in the judgment of charity, that they come forward with convicted hearts and sanctified minds. If otherwise, then are they only REGENERATE in the lower and ceremonial, and not in the higher and spiritual, sense. The distinction is happily expressed in our twenty-seventh article: 'Baptism is NOT ONLY a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened; BUT it is also a sign of regeneration, or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism RIGHTLY are grafted into the church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God

by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed ; faith is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer unto God.'

How idle, then, to impute to us a belief in mere sacramental regeneration ! How idle ! when a thorough change of the heart and its affections is constantly urged upon the hearer, and described, as 'a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness ; For, being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.' When the qualifications required of adult persons, previous to their baptism, are these, 'repentance, whereby they forsake sin ; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament.' Whoever misconstrues language, forcible and unequivocal as this, must be determined to misconstrue. Whoever secretly insinuates, or openly declares, that we have no faith in the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit in producing these blessed results, can, from his own feelings, derive but a very faint conception of the sincerity with which, after the ordinance of baptism is celebrated, we address this prayer to our heavenly Father : 'GIVE THY HOLY SPIRIT to these persons ; that being now BORN AGAIN, and made heirs of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, they may continue thy servants, and attain thy promises, through the same Lord Jesus Christ thy Son.'

The truth is, that there is no church, there is no ministry set for the defence of the gospel, more strenuous in contending for a radical change of nature ; a change of a moral, as well as of an intellectual, character ; a change in the habits, inclinations, and delights of the soul. We have no confidence in loud professions, none in mere ceremonial compliances. We are for making Christians such as Paul, as dead to sin, and as alive to righteousness. We are for counselling you, brethren, 'as the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts ; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind ; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' And is all this happily effected ? Instead of imputing it to unassisted human capa-



bilities, we gratefully acknowledge, it is only 'through the Spirit,' that man can 'mortify the deeds of the body ;' it is 'the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus,' that doth make 'us free from the law of sin and death.'

Another charge, frequently advanced against the church and its clergy, is, that we decry the doctrine of justification by faith, and prefer to attribute our salvation to the merit of our good works. And if the words of an enemy are to be credited, there can be no doubt of our guilt ; we are wonderfully reprobate concerning the true faith, and have need to be taught what are the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. But what is our own statement ? To whom do we profess to look for salvation ? What is the tenour of the article most cordially and unreservedly embraced by us ? 'We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith ; and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the homily of justification.' Christ Jesus is consequently the sole object of our reliance, the only Being through whose merits and intercession we anticipate the gift of eternal life.

Strictly speaking, faith itself is far from meritorious. It does not include the principle of our redemption. It is not the original cause of our reconciliation with God. It can do no more than enable us to lay hold on the precious promises made us through Christ. He alone constitutes our hope, and joy, and crown of rejoicing. He alone, through his unsinning obedience, his incarnation, sufferings, and death ; he alone deserves and enjoys with us the high honour of being 'the way, the truth, and the life,' 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' This is our estimate of him ; this our construction of the conditional efficacy of faith ; for this, we pronounce 'justification by faith only' to be 'a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.' Insomuch, that to yield it up would impair a material feature, which distinguishes the covenant of grace ; a feature, through which, our frail and imperfect services, when proceeding

out of a true penitent heart and lively faith, are mercifully accepted in lieu of that strict, undeviating performance of the divine will, which it is, both naturally and morally, impossible for us to accomplish. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

I am, indeed, free to assert, that were it even practicable for us to lead a perfectly pure and sinless life, nothing but the most monstrous arrogance could ever induce us to claim the never ending rewards of heaven, as a matter of right, justly accruing to us, for the exemplary holiness of, perhaps, an hour, a day, or at most, a few years. The disparity would be too great; the disproportion between the thing claimed and the thing performed, far too obvious to be reconciled even with our own notions of retributive justice; and, therefore, we should not hesitate a single moment in arriving at the conclusion distinctly avowed in the epistle to the Ephesians: 'By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.'

Less than this, reason itself should not fail to teach, and the church does not speak more loftily. She recommends not to her members the deplorable predicament of 'being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness.' She knows very well, that 'without faith it is impossible to please God.' She is thoroughly persuaded, that if her clergy were to surrender so essential a part of the Christian doctrine, they might as well throw aside their bibles, as well sever the thread of accountability, and cease to urge upon your hopes and fears the bliss of heaven, and the pains of hell. Hear her own deliberate opinion, embracing the case of the impenitent and unbelieving: 'Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.'

Neither let any man doubt it, who is able to trace effects to their causes ; who is capable of appreciating works by the motives which produce them. Let him rather reflect, that actions precisely similar to the eye, like donations to the poor, for example, may yet proceed from very different views ; and that, although we are unable to distinguish the evil from the good, Omniscient wisdom is still sure to penetrate the secret impulses of the soul, and determine, at a glance, which results from mere ostentation, and which from a truly liberal and charitable spirit. ‘For the Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.’ A circumstance evincing the necessity of connecting good motives with all our apparently good actions, and that satisfactorily explains the preceding article of the church, in accordance with both reason and scripture. For wherever the intention is bad, our conduct will not bear the scrutiny of the All-seeing eye. Wherever we are destitute of the faith in Jesus, exacted in the scriptures, there, we may be certain of displeasing God : there, the seemingly fairest virtues will spring from worldly maxims and prove of no avail, at the judgment day of Him who hath said, ‘Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.’

And yet, brethren, our church embraces no crude and barren faith. She is no promoter of antinomian principles. She denies not the ‘faithful saying’ of St. Paul, ‘These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.’ Her sentiments, on the contrary, are worthy of her origin. They are practical and sound, alike removed from laxity of morals, and the unproductive cry of Lord, Lord. You shall judge for yourselves : ‘Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment ; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively

faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit.'

How excellent in principle! How admirably adapted in practice, to promote the interests, and ensure the welfare of society! Let Christians cherish such sentiments; let these control the conduct of life, and no more will religion be wounded by the hands of its professed friends, no more will the proverbial outcry to the prejudice of morality cause the worldling to suspect their integrity. You here perceive the true foundation upon which the superstructure of good works must be erected. They possess no abstract merit, and they must be associated with the faith of Christ. 'For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.' 'Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?' They are the best evidence we can obtain of our recovery from the bondage of sin to the liberty of the sons of God. 'A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.' They are an undoubted standard, by which we may prove our own selves, and safely determine that we have not believed in vain, provided love to God and love to our neighbour have thoroughly pervaded the heart, and meliorated its otherwise selfish and unruly passions.

Others may fondly imagine their conversion to have been the work of a moment. They may principally credit it, from the idea of being able to point out the precise instant of its operation upon their passive souls, little heeding the memorable remark to the master in Israel, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit!' But without entering upon these subtleties, let us be content with a safer and better guide than that which may finally prove to be the day-dream of a wild and disordered mind. Let us only feel that we have made our peace with God,

when we experience that the fruits of peace unto holiness are exemplified in the practical piety and benevolence of our lives.

I know how prevalent the idea is, that religion is easily obtained. I know that with many, the presumptuous sinner of to-day is by no means incapacitated from becoming the holy saint of to-morrow. I also know that, for rejecting such doctrines, our church and her ministers are regarded with a jealous eye, and inveighed against as possessing the form of godliness, without the power thereof. But while we are constant in the belief, and happy in the conviction, that all men may partake of that grace of God which bringeth salvation, yet are we decidedly of opinion, that vigorous personal efforts are previously requisite, in order to obtain the victory over the corrupt passions and propensities of our nature. Prayer is essential; secret, ardent, and persevering prayer. But how arduous is the duty to unpractised lips, and minds unlettered in the knowledge of God! Faith is essential. But how is it to be secured at a moment's warning, with scarcely a prior thought bestowed upon the evidence on which rests the credibility of the gospel? Repentance is essential. But what confidence is to be placed in that repentance which is yet to be tested by a complete reformation of life and manners?

There is, indeed, a mode of obviating all these objections. It is easy to resort to certain imaginary decrees, and, reposing full confidence in them, to draw largely and expeditiously upon the power and influence of irresistible and all-conquering grace. But, then, what becomes of the admonition, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;' with innumerable others, clearly intimating the formidable impediments to the way everlasting, which the sinner encounters in the depravity of his nature, and its inveterate attachment to the idols of this world? Amid all the odium undeservedly cast upon our communion, I do verily believe, that we demand far higher evidence of the soul's conversion, than most of our accusers. They often appear to be satisfied with the sighs and tears, the repentance, prayers, and faith of a day. The related experience of an



hour is by no means an uncommon criterion, through which they are ready to welcome the returning prodigal, as a new creature in Christ Jesus. But we are apprehensive that these impressions may pass away, as the morning cloud and the early dew. We are confident that a life of holiness is the only legitimate evidence of our having actually taken up the cross of Christ, and followed him in the regeneration.

To be plain, brethren, we are doubtful of sudden conversions. We fear that the feelings are more excited, and the imagination inflamed, than the judgment convinced or the heart purified. It is not that we dislike revivals of religion. Every faithful minister of Jesus fervently prays that the hearts of all men may bow before the golden sceptre of Immanuel. It is not that we hesitate to receive the ever to be remembered scripture, 'Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.' By us, it is embraced without the slightest reservation, and considered as demanding the new birth, as an invariable prerequisite to the attainment of the kingdom of heaven.

But are we charged with excessive languor and apathy in the good cause of Christ? Is our religion questioned, and our church pronounced unfavourable to its growth, because we do not, after long intervals, flock in troops to the Redeemer's standard? I shall be exculpated in your eyes, if, with decorum and a charitable spirit, I repel the imputations, with such considerations as these: We cannot, with the view of producing a general excitement, adopt any expedient unknown to the scriptures, and unauthorized by the practice of Christ and his apostles. Equally opposed to precipitation on the one hand, and to procrastination on the other, we cannot avoid recommending, that, in the most important transaction of this life, the greatest care should be taken that our resolutions are deliberately formed, our principles clearly understood, our motives fairly canvassed, our affections deeply engaged, and our hearts firmly set upon witnessing a good confession before God and man.

Persuaded that the operations of the Spirit are gradual, and not instantaneous, we make a material distinction

between convictions of sin, and the actual passage from death unto life. So that, if large numbers, within a short period, and with little previous reflection, were to present themselves in order to partake of the bread which we break, and of the cup of blessing which we bless, it would be felt that many had probably mistaken the commencement for the consummation of grace. We should not doubt their sincerity. We should consider them perfectly honest and conscientious, alive to their dearest interests, and convinced of having obtained the one thing needful.

But pass some few months, and, in our opinion, the religion of those who together commenced the race of glory, and honour, and immortality, with the like fair and brilliant prospects, would exhibit a widely variant and discordant aspect. Some of them would have cherished their first impressions. They would have made diligent use of all the various means of grace, and, in this way, ensuring the divine blessing upon them, they would have gradually perfected the work already supposed to have been finished. Others, however, would have lost their first love. They would have relaxed by little and little from their original zeal, and at length perceiving their religious duties to become more and more irksome, they would either have abandoned them, under the idea of their having been self deluded; or else have consoled themselves with the flattering doctrine of their final perseverance.

Our opinion is, that in all such cases there is experienced, at the time of making a publick profession of faith in Christ, nothing more than sudden and violent convictions of sin; that those convictions may or may not prove the harbingers of ultimate conversion; but let them eventuate as they may, that the first class will always look back to this period, as the epoch of their regeneration, and the second be considered by their friends to have been grossly, though unintentionally, deceived. We cannot, therefore, encourage such precipitate, or rather unenlightened union with the church of Christ. When connected with the favourite system from which it springs, it re-

minds us of the oracles of Greece, so ambiguous in their predictions, as in no event to incur the slightest danger of remaining unfulfilled. The steadfastness of the one set of converts is accounted for, on the principle of their having been really born again; the apostacy of the other, on the ground of having mistaken the nature of their spiritual experience. The whole theory is consequently constructed in so ingenious a manner, so admirably adapted to any sequel, that it is almost impossible to convince them of its fallacy. They who do not fall away are firm believers in instantaneous regeneration; some of those, who do, are unwilling to abandon it, in the hope that their delinquency is but temporary, and the residue are left to acknowledge that they never were converted.

I do not wonder that the best and most intelligent divines, among our dissenting brethren, are beginning to detect, and expose, the unhappy delusion. No one will question the competency of Dr. Mason, whom I have before quoted, to form an accurate opinion upon the subject. His language is peculiarly striking, and I cannot resist the inclination to transcribe it. According to him, ‘Some, in fine, think that religious experience is the sole test of admission into the church, provided a man can satisfy them of his conversion, (and they are not always HARD to be satisfied;) if he can relate a plausible story of his feelings, can talk of his distress, and of his comfort, and has learnt to deal in joys and ecstasies, it is enough. How he came by his experience, he probably cannot tell, and his spiritual guides often omit to ask. And yet, this is often the point, upon which turns the discrimination between true and false religion; between rational experience and fanaticism; between good influences of the Spirit of God, and their counterfeits. It is lamentable that so LARGE a proportion of conversions, which are the fruit of tumultuous meetings, and the theme of NEWSPAPER praise, prove to be of this class. Dark views, gross ignorance, and even flat contradictions in the simplest truths of Christianity, are no obstacle. Thousands go from sin to God; from nature to grace; from condemnation to pardon; from despondency to rapture: and, when interrogated about the process

by which this marvellous transition was accomplished, have little or nothing to say, but that **THEY HAVE FELT SO**. And what is still more astonishing, they have been translated from darkness to light without being illuminated! For the uttering of incoherent exclamation, and the chattering over a set of phrases, though accompanied with vehement passions, with shrieks, and fallings, and faintings, and fits, and trances, must not pass for divine illumination, nor divine influence of any sort. When we consider the mechanism of the human affections, and how rapidly emotion is propagated **BY SYMPATHY** through promiscuous crowds, we can explain all the phenomena, which in this matter have lately attracted the publick wonder, without recourse to supernatural agency; and must be convinced that nothing can be more precarious, than the tenure by which these **SUDDEN CONVERTS** hold their profession.'

Nor let it be thought, that the sentiments of this celebrated preacher are perfectly detached and isolated. Dr. Beecher, a no less celebrated and able congregational divine, has borne an equally decided testimony, in his remarks upon some late extraordinary revivals in the presbyterian churches of New York. He has reduced his observations to several heads, and, upon this, 'the **HASTY** recognition of persons as converted, upon their own judgment, without interrogation or evidence,' he thus writes: 'Revivals may become so great and rapid, as to make it proper that those experiencing a change, **IN THE COURSE OF A DAY**, should meet in one place, not to be recognised as **CONVERTS**, but to be examined, cautioned, and instructed; for the more powerful and rapid is the work of grace in a community, the more certain is the existence of **SYMPATHY**, and all the causes of **SELF DECEPTION**; and the more imperious the necessity of caution, unless we would replenish the church with **HYPOCRITES**, to keep her agitated by discipline, or covered with shame by the neglect of it.'

The writer's opinions are the more valuable, because he is an ardent promoter of temperate and judicious revivals; but for those of a wild, inflammable description, he has no respect; he is satisfied of their having, in some degree, acquired that complexion among his presbyterian friends,

and, after many admirable thoughts, draws towards a conclusion in these forcible terms: 'I have only to add that all the evil may, with perfect ease, be avoided, without diminishing the true spirit and power of a revival; but in every respect shall increase it. There is no need of praying as if God and man were deaf, or of wallowing on the floor, and frothing at the mouth, as if filled with hydrophobia, instead of the Spirit of God; nor any harm in kindness and gentleness, nor any benefit in harsh and severe epithets. The state of man may be explained to him so that he shall believe and feel, better than by calling him a devil, a viper, or a serpent. There may be as great directness as is needed, or as is possible without indecorum, and the gospel may be preached faithfully and attended with the power of God, without GROANING in prayer, and crying 'AMEN,' and without FEMALE prayers and exhortations, and without that spiritual PRIDE, which never fails to attend pressing the mass of the community out of their places, and shaking together in one cauldron of effervescence all the passions of all the classes in human society.' And again, 'Dear brethren in Christ, you must not, for a moment, suppose that I do not fervently love you; or that I ascribe to you, in extenso, all the defects to which I have alluded. But that I have drawn the outlines of a moral chart, which such a disastrous revival, as your present course could not fail to lead to, would amply fill up, I have not a doubt.'

Such, then, brethren, are the opinions of two of the strongest men to be found in the dissenting churches, in regard to the excesses committed under the guise of religion. The opinions themselves I do not hesitate to approve. The language in which they are expressed may be objectionable, and I do not propose to become responsible either for its sarcasm or its caustick severity. But, certainly, from the enemies of the church, I have the same right to avail myself of self accusing concessions, that the conqueror has to wield the weapons of a vanquished foe; and I desire no more convincing evidence to sustain the views entertained by us, in relation to the extravagances, which have become extremely prevalent



under the popular and imposing name of revivals. I have not that confidence in them, which I should have, if they were more sober, enlightened, and durable; if the soul was not stormed through the imagination; if the heart was not supposed to be quickened in a moment, and the full-grown saint manufactured, in the twinkling of an eye, out of the votary of the world, the veteran in guilt, and, of course, the ignoramus in divinity.

But I will not stoop to the language of invective. Our Christian brethren, so far as we are concerned, have an undoubted right to follow the dictates of their own judgment, and sincerely do I rejoice, whenever their labours are attended with the salvation of immortal souls. My object is purely defensive. It is to justify the church for pursuing, what we claim the privilege of believing to be a more scriptural mode of instruction; and although it must be acknowledged to enlist in its favour far less excitement and enthusiasm, yet is it to be seriously borne in mind, that while the murmuring of the rivulet is heard, the deep, majestick stream glides in peace and quietness to its ocean home. And long may it continue to flow and fertilize with its waters the vineyard of the Lord. Even from the summary sketch, I have drawn, of the more important articles of our faith, you must be convinced, that purer doctrines were never imbodyed from the inspired volume, and that we have abundant reason to characterize them, as 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.'

Never, then, let us surrender them in compliance with the errors and prejudices of others. They were adopted with the utmost deliberation, when our American, became a distinct branch of the holy apostolick church, and by a convention, that understood their import precisely as they have been interpreted in your hearing. A circumstance, that evidently exonerates us from the stigma of inconsistency, to which I have before alluded. For had they countenanced a single ingredient in the poisoned chalice of Calvinism, it would have been expunged. Had it been deemed practicable to have improved them, in any one particular, the time was favourable, the ability ample, and the authority undoubted. But no improvement could be

suggested ; they were preserved unbroken and entire ; and still continuing to receive the approbation of our minds and consciences, they bid fair to be the true faith of churchmen to the end of time.

I will only subjoin my fervent prayer to God, that, to the extent of our day and generation, our talents and resources of every description, we may be included within the number. They will enable us to shun all those ill concealed rocks of heresy and schism, upon which so many immortal souls have made everlasting shipwreck of their faith and holiness. The brilliant lamp of their salvation will guide us, in peace and safety, to our journey's end. And when, at last, we are called upon to exchange the church militant for the church triumphant, it will be seen, in the presence of an assembled throng of angels, ready to bear us on exulting wing to the heavenly mansions ; it will be seen, that, compiled in undeviating conformity to the doctrines, which are according to godliness, they have materially contributed to work out for us an 'exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' AMEN.

## SERMON XVII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

THERE is yet remaining one doctrine of the church, to which, upon reflection, I have concluded, brethren, to direct your attention. It is not that its belief is absolutely essential to the Christian character. It is not but that many precious souls will hereafter enjoy the blessedness of those whose sins are forgiven, who shall have existed

here below perfectly ignorant of its nature, and, therefore, deprived of the capacity to yield to the biblical evidence, upon which it is founded. But the doctrine is interesting in itself, and requires to be known; the church is sometimes rudely assailed for admitting it into the articles of her belief; and it certainly contradicts one of the most common and popular errors, prevailing in the age and country in which we live.

From their youth up, the great body of the people are taught to believe, that, immediately after death, the departed soul either ascends to heaven or descends to hell; and never have I witnessed more surprise, than when the idea has been opposed, as entirely groundless and untenable. We are at once suspected of consigning the spirits of the dead to a temporary oblivion, or perhaps the purgatory of the catholick is suggested to the mind of the hearer, and he trembles lest the grossness of that fantasy should be attempted to be palmed upon his understanding. But no such thing! We reject both the one and the other. As in every particular to which I have already adverted, here also we build upon the sure foundation of holy oracles, and are only astonished at the extraordinary facility, with which one of their most obvious intimations is usually overlooked.

I will explain myself at large. Twice on each revolving sabbath, we are accustomed to express our belief in the affirmation of the creed, commonly called the apostles', respecting our Lord Jesus Christ, that 'he descended into hell;' while the third article of our religion is conceived in these terms: 'As Christ died for us, and was buried; so also is it to be believed, that he went down into hell.' Are these expressions, then, to be interpreted in a figurative or a literal sense? Are they to be considered as describing an event, and designating a place, which exists only in the regions of fancy, or such solemn and serious truths, as are worthy of all acceptation? I answer, that they are to be interpreted literally. I answer, that, when we affirm of the blessed Jesus, that 'he descended into hell,' we refer to the actual flight and residence of his soul, during the period of its separation from his disanimated body.

Not, however, that we give the slightest countenance to the horrible idea of his visiting the place of torment, and there enduring the agonies of the second death. For what concord has Christ with Belial, that he should enter the infernal pit? Or, how could we then understand the declaration made to the thief upon the cross, 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise?' Paradise, which is a term indicative of pleasure and not of pain, of reward and not of punishment. No, no; when the Saviour of sinners, at the closing scene of his mortal life, cried out, 'It is finished;' when 'he bowed the head and gave up the ghost;' then was fully accomplished the entire aggregate of mental and corporeal agony, he was content to endure, and all was peace, and happiness, and joy.

He, indeed, 'descended into hell;' but we are to remember, that this sentence concludes with a word of Saxon derivation. A word, that, instead of implying, as it now does, the reverse of heaven, originally imported no more than the 'Inferi' of the Latins, and the 'ᾠδης' of the Greeks; that is, in our English tongue, and, as explained in the rubrick before the creed, 'the place of departed spirits.' In this sense, and in this alone, do we there use it; and although its more modern signification may induce some scruples of conscience in the uninformed, the same observation applies to no less than eleven passages of the new testament; wherever, indeed, the original word is 'ᾠδης' and not 'γεεννα;' both of which are translated 'hell,' in the received version; but while the latter indicates the place of eternal misery, the former merely denotes the intermediate state of the soul after death, and prior to the general judgment. It includes the Elysium and the Tartarus of the poets, and is sufficiently delineated, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, to convince us, that it is divided into two separate mansions; the one being a common receptacle for the souls of the righteous; the other, for those of 'the ungodly and the sinner.'

So that, when the church, by the adoption of the creed, and by the doctrine of her third article, maintains the actual descent of Christ into hell, she only coincides with

all Christian antiquity, and I may add with almost all protestant divines of any repute, in the belief, that his soul was transmitted to Abraham's bosom, or to that paradise of God, where the spirits of the righteous exist, in the full assurance of a final reunion with their slumbering dust, and a subsequent ascension into the abodes of perennial felicity. The church coincides with these, and not these alone; since the same doctrine is clearly and satisfactorily deduced from several passages of the sacred volume.

I have already mentioned one, which affords irresistible evidence of its truth. For when our Saviour addressed the penitent thief with the inspiring promise, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;' he could not possibly allude to heaven in the highest sense, because upon his resurrection, he declared to Mary Magdalen, 'Touch me not; for I have not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.' To what other region, then, could he have accompanied his fellow sufferer, immediately after death, and previous to his return to life again? I know of none, unless we admit the doctrine of an intermediate state, for the temporary reception of disimbodied spirits.

This doctrine is further corroborated by the testimony of St. Peter, where he affirms of Christ, that he 'hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.' Spirits, that were not in heaven, because heaven is never characterized as a prison: Spirits, that were not in an ultimate hell, because the light of the gospel, and the preaching of the cross, can never penetrate the everlasting abodes of darkness and despair. But only acknowledge the existence of the paradise contended for, and we immediately discern the propriety of announcing to the spirits of those just men, who died previous to the crucifixion of Christ, that the great work of their redemption was at length completely accomplished; that he had liquidated the wages of sin, and ensured their eventual enjoyment of the kingdom of glory.



There is also a remarkable passage in the second chapter of the Acts, which abundantly verifies the doctrine in question. In the course of his address to the men of Israel, the apostle Peter quotes this prophecy from the sixteenth psalm : 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' He quotes it, with the express reservation, that the patriarch David 'spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.' All which was gloriously fulfilled, in the stupendous miracle of his rising from the dead ; when his soul and body separated from each other, by the crucifixion, were once more united ; once more fully recognised by his faithful adherents, and, until the period of his ascension into heaven, employed as usual in instructing them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Although he had been put to death in the flesh, he was quick in the Spirit, and went and preached to the spirits in prison ; but his soul was not left in hell, it did not remain in paradise, with the soul of the penitent thief ; and, if not left, then, it must have been there antierior to the resurrection. Although his crucified body was taken down from the cross, and entombed in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, yet was it raised from the dead by the power of God, and, therefore, his flesh did not see corruption.

So far, indeed, as it relates to the human body of Christ, all Christians concur in the uniform testimony of the evangelists, that as it rested in hope, so it was raised in glory ; as it was consigned to the cerements of the tomb a breathless corpse, so after three days it was made alive again, without experiencing the decomposing influence of the grave. And if they can furnish another explanation of the place, where in the interim his soul resided ; a place in which it was not LEFT, and that is evidently described by the apostle, as equally UNSUITED to its prolonged abode, as was the grave to that of his body, and consequently it could not be heaven ; I am content to listen to their argument, and, if it does not prove better than I anticipate, to refute it with the utmost ease.

For this purpose, I could now adduce many other passages of similar import to the preceding, profusely scattered throughout the gospels and epistles, but inasmuch as those already produced sufficiently authenticate the proposition, that 'As Christ died for us, and was buried ; so also is it to be believed, that he went down into hell ;' I shall proceed to some few remarks, that are more immediately connected with the concerns of the living.

And, certainly, the view I have taken destroys the almost insupportable idea of a temporary annihilation of our existence. It convinces us, that if Christ went and preached to the spirits of the departed, there is an appropriate residence, no matter where, for every soul of man, between the hour of his dissolution, and the day of judgment ; that we shall not then become to 'dumb forgetfulness a prey ;' but rather experience, in our nobler nature, still greater powers of intellection than we now enjoy. I acknowledge, however, that this is far from being a source of consolation to those, who are living without God in the world, and who have every reason to prefer the slumber of ages to an immediate companionship with the rich man, in the intervening state of partial torment. But what righteous man is there, believing in a general resurrection and a general judgment ; believing that body and soul must be reunited, before an entrance can be ministered unto him abundantly, into the everlasting presence of his heavenly Father ; what righteous man is there, who, under these circumstances, will not rejoice in the scriptural assurance of a place adapted to the separate existence of his soul, and replete with enjoyments of no ordinary description ?

Remember, that he will there be associated, with the pious friends and relatives, whom he tenderly loved in this vale of tears. He will there commence his communion and fellowship with the saints of every age, with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, with the blessed company of the apostles, and the noble army of martyrs. He will there anticipate with them the full fruition of bliss, which shall succeed the second coming of our Lord, with all his holy angels with him, to judge the world in righteousness.

And is not this far better than a state of dreamless repose and unconscious oblivion? Is it not far better to live in paradise, surrounded with congenial spirits, than to endure, for an indefinite period, a total suspension of all the active powers of the mind, and all the philanthropick affections of the heart?

Surely, brethren, it was with the design of encouraging us to run with patience the race set before us, that our Saviour said, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.' And yet, forasmuch as the rewards of heaven can only be obtained, after the resurrection of those who die in the Lord, if there be no intermediate mansion of departed and rejoicing spirits, the soul is as effectually destroyed by death as the body, and will only revive with it, only live, when it shall forever relinquish the bondage of the grave. The whole of which is manifestly opposed to the consolation offered by Him, who knew all things, to his persecuted followers; and is, moreover, directly subversive of the expectations entertained by the holy apostle, when he looked forward with rapture to the day of his death; when he ardently longed to depart and be with Christ, to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Well, then, may the believer, in these remoter ages, rely upon a like glorious change; well may he refuse to despond, under the dismal apprehension, that his soul shall sleep with the body the oblivious sleep of death, however temporary. It is rather released from this state of sin and sorrow, for other and nobler purposes. It is released from its mortal companion, in order to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, where it will exist in the transporting hope of future glory, and under the all-pervading consciousness, that 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'

There is, besides, another aspect, in which the subject presents itself, in a most persuasive and practical manner. For the moment we accede to the continued existence of departed spirits, we necessarily invest them with all the mental powers, which they exhibited in the course of their earthly probation. They can reason and reflect

They can call up to remembrance past events, and communicate their thoughts, each to the other, with perhaps more than their wonted facility, while here below. And what must be the consequence? Every thing that transpires on earth is known to them; not by immediate inspection; not that I confide in the rhetorical flourish, through which the souls of the dead are represented to be continually hovering over the places which once knew them. But death is ever removing his victims, here and there, from this transient life. Spirit after spirit is perpetually hastening to the world of spirits, and when arrived within its confines, possessed of memory, and reason, and the capacity of imparting knowledge: Is it credible that they should remain perversely silent and incommunicative of the transactions of this world? As well might we deny that the human soul of Christ preached to the spirits in prison; as well contend that the whole parable is spurious, which minutely details the conversation occurring between the rich man and the father of the faithful. Since both are in strict accordance with the principle I have suggested, and both are evidently supposititious, unless spirit can communicate to spirit every particle of intelligence it has previously acquired. On the contrary, by admitting their genuineness, we are forced to concede that, as Christ announced his triumphs upon the cross to the inmates of paradise, and as the rich man is represented relating to Abraham the precise situation of his five brethren, remaining within the precincts of time; so every recently departed soul is empowered to impart to the souls, with whom it is destined to associate, an accurate account of whatever passed within its personal cognizance, in the land of the dying.

How easy, then, to develop the practical benefits which may result from this imposing and scriptural view of the subject. Too many of our race: too many, perchance, of this very audience, are far more disposed to fear man than the Maker of man. They can readily indulge the corrupt propensities of our nature, notwithstanding the Omniscient eye is continually upon them, spying out all their ways, and still entirely refrain in the presence of friends and

relatives, whose religious feelings they respect, and whose good opinions they are anxious to retain.

But, in process of time, those friends, those relatives, whose piety operated as a salutary restraint upon their conduct in life, are summoned to that bourn from which no traveller returns, and, then, the impatient sinner too often rushes with avidity into the broad road which leadeth to destruction. The fear of God, and the certainty of his overruling providence are scarcely ever permitted to cross his morbid mind; and as for man, unless possessed of some colour of right, in virtue of the ties of affinity, he alike braves his censure and disdains his applause.

But only allow the doctrine, which I am anxious to inculcate, only allow this to become the settled persuasion of his mind, and what inestimable benefits might not directly follow in its train! Imagine that he has been deprived of an affectionate and pious parent; of one, whom he both loved and feared, and whose loss he could not but sincerely lament. Instead of absolutely burying all parental authority in the dust before him, this doctrine awakens new, and, peradventure, more lively impressions than he ever before experienced. He represents to himself his beloved relative, in the preparatory abode of blessedness, and not only so, not only enjoying its incipient state of triumph and glory; but as regularly apprized, by those of his acquaintance, who successively yield to the summons of death, of the identical manner in which he employs the few moments allotted him to prepare for eternity.

If, therefore, he sincerely venerates the memory of the pious dead, will he not exult in pursuing a course of conduct, which, being communicated, would cause the living spirit to rejoice, as the angels are said to rejoice over one sinner that repenteth? Or, if he revered his parent with a truly filial fear, while a resident in time, would he not earnestly endeavour to avoid all such offences as would grieve his sainted spirit, as the Spirit of God is described to be grieved, in witnessing the contradiction of sinners? I appeal, brethren, to your individual consciences, and am bold to assert, that under the circumstances,



which have been recited, that man would be vile amongst the vile, who could continue utterly regardless of the light, in which his actions would be viewed in paradise, by the once dearest object of his affections; the once fond, indulgent parent, who longs, even in that blissful region, to hear of those personal attainments in religion, which shall at length produce a happy reunion, where there are neither tears to shed, nor parting benedictions to pronounce.

There is also another feature in this survey, which nothing but the sense of duty could ever induce me to bring up to your reflections. We have most of us experienced the melancholy bereavement of the friends and relatives we loved, and fondly do we cherish the hope that they are now rejoicing, in the intermediate state of happiness. It is possible, however, that we may hereafter find ourselves mistaken. I may be mistaken with regard to one who was most dear to my heart, and so may either of your number, in relation to your equally beloved kindred. They may be on the fatal side of the impassable gulf, and yet, being fully certified of our present character in the sight of heaven, through the same medium to which I have called your attention: What are their feelings towards us? What the line of conduct they would have us pursue?

Believe me, brethren, they would only hear of our acceptance of the overtures of the gospel. They would only hear that we had become the humble followers of the cross of Christ. Believe me, and not me alone, since the scriptures are as full and convincing upon the matter, as it is possible to conceive of. I once more allude to the case of the rich man, and am indifferent whether you consider the narrative an allegory or not; inasmuch as it cannot be less than a representation of what does take place, and, therefore, it settles, in either event, the only principle that is worth debating.

Listen, then, to the words which he is described as uttering, being in torment. They are addressed to Abraham, and are couched in the once despised language of prayer: 'I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him,' that is, Lazarus, 'to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also

come into this place of torment.' Memory, then, was his; affection, his; the power to communicate, his; and when I have remarked to you, that he seems to have utterly renounced the now proverbial fact, that misery loves company; the lucid and momentous character of the incidents unfolded renders all other comment superfluous. They completely establish the knowledge which the spirits of the dead have of the affairs of the living. They plainly evince, that however happy our own departed and beloved relatives may be, in the society of Abraham, the wretched Dives is not the only being who would gladly send a messenger to prevail with impenitent sinners to flee from the wrath to come. But, alas! 'if they hear not Moses and the prophets,' Christ and the apostles, 'neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.'

Such, therefore, brethren, is the practical use to which I would subject the principal argument of this discourse. Some of us may have little regard for the exalted Being, most worthy of continual love, and reverence, and fear; little regard, for the very reason, that he never was, and never can be, corporeally present to our senses. But we have stood in awe of those, whose spirits are now, as we trust, rejoicing in hope, or, dreadful to think, trembling in agony; and let us govern our future lives by the conviction, that they are perfectly acquainted with the respective parts we are acting in this fleeting show, and, whatever may have been their previous solitudes, that they are now universally desirous of learning our actual transition, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Let us govern ourselves by this conviction, for it may bring us to our senses, in relation to the great Jehovah himself. It may teach us to fear him who can destroy and make alive. And, then, the great object of our existence will be accomplished. We shall be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and, although our bodies must necessarily see corruption, our better souls will go where Christ has gone before us.

In drawing to a conclusion, I must not, however, fail to remind you, that the prevailing error, of departed souls being forthwith consigned to an ultimate heaven or hell, is

not only at variance with those scriptures, which inculcate the existence of an intermediate state ; but with many others, utterly incapable of being tortured into harmony with it. If, for example, there were any spirits of just men already entered into their everlasting rest, we might be certain of the present heavenly felicity of the man after God's own heart. But what says the apostle, in relation to his body, about which there is no controversy ? ' Men and brethren, let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.' What in relation to his soul ? ' David is not ascended into the heavens : but he saith himself, 'The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.'

If it were not a mere illusion, it would also seem, that the spirits of the righteous dead must enjoy the felicity of beholding the glorified body of their ascended Redeemer face to face. But the apostle evidently refers this gratifying circumstance to his second coming, addressing the faithful in this manner : ' When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.' He does not intimate that they would be with him before ; nor, when the holy angels are introduced as attending him on the day, that in his glorious majesty he shall come to judge the quick and the dead, does it appear that the souls of the saints are to bear them company, in their flight from the heavenly world. On the contrary, every thing revealed, concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the great and terrible day of judgment, clearly indicates that these events must precede the recognition of Christ by believers, and the bestowment of his rewards upon them. ' These are his own words, foretelling this consequence of the coming of the Son of Man : ' Then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven ; ' and again : ' Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.'

Whereas, the error I am combating, involves the monstrous absurdity of a previous entrance into heaven, and a previous enjoyment of its rewards. It even supposes the

souls of the righteous to come out from its blissful courts and, of course, those of the unrighteous from their dreadful abyss, in order to be reunited to their respective bodies, and listen to sentences already executed: 'Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;' 'Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' But the doctrine of an intermediate state harmonizes with all these events; it corresponds with the idea of a general judgment, and agrees with the memorable declaration of Paul to the Thessalonians: 'For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we, which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.'

Nor is it justly liable to any objection. When, for instance, the same apostle expresses himself, as 'willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,' it does not necessarily imply a personal interview immediately succeeding his death. For if, while Christ's disciples continue in this sinful state, he could promise and say, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;' much more will he be spiritually, though not corporeally, present with them, in the blessed mansions of paradise; those mansions, where the soul of Lazarus is represented to have been carried by the angels, and where Abraham is described as the principal personage, which could not have been true, had it been designed to convey the idea of heaven; the heaven, where Christ was, and to whom, in this case, the rich man would have addressed himself, rather than to a created intelligence. But according to the true construction, with great propriety is he spoken of, as pleading with the father of the faithful, and from him receiving the answers, which so thor-

oughly baffled all his hopes, whether relating to himself, or to the kindred he had left behind.

Let it also be remembered, that our views upon this subject materially vary from the Roman catholick notion of a purgatory. For the papists arrange departed souls into three distinct classes: One of which, being completely cleansed from all the defilements contracted in this life, ascend immediately to heaven: Another, dying impenitent and guilty of mortal sins, are as quickly cast into hell: While the third, all of whom are eventually to be received up into glory, first require to be purified from some venial sins, not sufficiently repented of here below; and, therefore, the purgatory to which they are doomed for an indefinite period; therefore, the masses catholicks repeat for the repose of the dead, and their speedy enlargement from a punitive prison, to the house not made with hands, which is eternal in the heavens. All this, however, we are compelled to reject as a mere figment, unfounded in the scriptures, and diametrically opposed to the doctrine, which they deliver, describing this life as the only state of probation; requiring of every man to be here cleansed from all unrighteousness, and to become pure as God is pure, holy as God is holy; and determining the future irreversible doom of all, in this emphatick language: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.'

Finally, brethren, I have to suggest, that the doctrine of an intermediate state should not be discarded on the ground of novelty, as it is peculiar to no age or country, nor to any protestant denomination. It is rather maintained, by all the great divines of our church, from the time of Cranmer, to that of Horsley, and, notwithstanding the popular opinion, upon which I have animadverted, our learned dissenting brethren have not been averse from defending its scriptural authority, as may be seen in the writings of Doddridge, Watts, Campbell, and M'Knight of the presbyterian church; and Wesley, and Adam Clarke of the methodist, with many others. There are, indeed, few



truths, contained in the sacred volume, susceptible of clearer demonstration. Let us, therefore, unitedly bless the Lord our God, for the paradise he has been pleased to prepare, for the disembodied souls of the righteous ; and under the soothing conviction, that they are not to be consigned to a state of unconscious oblivion, in the interval between death and the resurrection, let us devoutly adopt the language of the sweet singer of Israel, and say, 'Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward ; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee ; if I could declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.' AMEN.

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## SERMON XVIII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

IN strict conformity with the vow or declaration recorded in the text, I have endeavoured, brethren, to present you with a compendious view of the principal features of our venerable church. Having made the vow my own, you must judge of the facts and arguments which it has elicited, whether they have been true or false, strong or weak ; whether I have or have not succeeded in giving a satisfactory account of our government and ministry, our institutions and worship, our leading doctrines and articles of religion. Forbearance has been long exercised. Controversy of every description has been studiously avoided, and nothing but the most solemn sense of duty could have induced me to deviate from a course, persisted in for years.

and having for its foundation a sincere desire to 'live peaceably with all men.'

But while that desire is not in the slightest degree impaired ; while fully sensible that the servant of Jesus must not strive, I have yet dared to appear in defence of the truth ; I have yet dared, for Zion and Jerusalem's sake, to expose myself to the animadversions I would fain deprecate. Not, therefore, in the spirit of chivalry ; not that I would gladly break a lance with any of our opposers, in some hard fought field of theology. For if the apostle has exhorted all Christians in these terms, ' Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection ; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment ; ' you may easily conceive that the Christian minister must feel no inconsiderable share of regret, at the necessity, which is frequently imposed upon him, of inculcating, again and again, the true scriptural views of these great and important topics ; regret, owing to the existence of many gross and dangerous errors, and because of the collisions to which it unavoidably subjects him.

For even upon these elementary principles, the clergy of the church will find some one denomination or other to differ from, and none that entirely concur with, her in sentiment. Many persons there are to assert the intrinsic merit of good works. The anabaptist contests the validity of infant baptism, and is equally adverse to sprinkling or affusion. The presbyterian, congregational, and most, if not all, other protestant sects, are opposed to the laying on of hands in confirmation. Upon the subject of the resurrection of the dead, we have not only to combat the infidel, but unhappily nominal Christians of every church, who, if they do not absolutely disavow its certainty, are, nevertheless, extremely indifferent to its ulterior consequences. And then, in relation to an eternal judgment, it is well known that the universalist professes an ardent attachment to the theory of final felicity ; to the eventual reception of the vilest sinner into mansions of imperishable glory.

It is, therefore, with unfeigned sorrow that we are often forced to maintain 'the first principles of the oracles of God,' rather than continually beseech you to 'go on unto perfection,' as if thoroughly persuaded that every professed believer was 'endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' by acknowledging 'there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.' On the contrary, new sources of variance are perpetually unfolding themselves. When we administer the symbolized body and blood of Christ, we come in contact with the quaker, who rejects the visible celebration of this sacrament. When we invoke the influences of the Holy Spirit, and rely upon one Lord and one mediator between God and man, we are called in question by the unitarian, denying to the former all personality, and to the latter his eternal Sonship and Divinity.

And still, brethren, surrounded as we are on every side, by these elements of hostility, there is, nevertheless, one consoling circumstance, through which the picture I have drawn is in a great measure deprived of its gloomy and revolting features, so far at least as the personal feelings of churchmen are concerned. Strange and paradoxical, then, as it may appear to persons unaccustomed to an accurate analysis of systems, it is, notwithstanding, strictly true, that, upon almost every principle cited from the apostle, and every doctrine comprised in our articles, we have the satisfaction of knowing that a vast majority of the protestant world clearly coincide in sentiment with us. The reason is this: The different denominations CANNOT AGREE wherein the church they have abandoned is wrong; but, DIVIDING in their opinions, some are found to assail her on one quarter, and some on another. The consequence is, that she proves herself invulnerable upon all points, so far as numbers are permitted to test the credibility of her doctrines.

And certainly, in the present case, numbers derive more than an ordinary weight of authority, from the consideration of their shifting so perpetually, that, in the issue, we

gain the approbation of all parties to some one or other of the prominent articles of our faith; the more orthodox concurring with us in the weightier, and the residue only increasing the ratio of their respective distances, in proportion to the sum total of their multiplied errors and divisions, until, at length, they dwindle down, and imperceptibly blend with the friends and retainers of infidelity.

For do we require the co-operation of others, in support of an holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God? We obtain the suffrages of the great body of that vast variety of small and discordant sects which have sprung up, and gradually estranged themselves from the first presbyterian schism. Do we need assistance in defence of sprinkling and infant baptism? Our auxiliaries are equally numerous, and unite their voices in opposition to a few baptists. Do we need additional strength in favour of the two sacraments of the gospel? The baptist himself becomes our advocate, and fewer still are found to confide in the disconnected inward excitements and spiritual repasts of the quaker. Do we insist upon the eternity of future punishments? The quaker, in his turn, will not refuse us the authority of his creed, in exposing the dreamy confidence of the universalist. Do we uphold the doctrine of a vicarious sacrifice and atonement for sin? We perceive the universalist, not merely joining our ranks, but so fondly anxious for the salvation of good and bad, penitent and impenitent, as to exalt the divine oblation and propitiation of Christ to a height, at yet greater variance with the low estimation in which he is held by the unitarian. Do we adhere to the authenticity and inspiration of the generally received canon of scripture? Unitarians, for the most part, combine in aiding us to drive the infidel from his puny shifts and miserable evasions. Do we 'believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible?' Even the wretched infidel is here ready to tender us his ungracious hand, and assist in demolishing the baseless fabrick of atheism, if atheism there be.

How evident, then, when we examine the church on the one hand, and the seceders in a body on the other;

how evident that these last are so exceedingly rent and divided in their opposition, that the aggregate of their testimony, upon every controverted doctrine, not peculiar to episcopalians, is decidedly in favour of the faith we have so long and so religiously maintained. And what are the fair inferences to be gained from this brief review? Before they can justly charge us with errors, they should first cultivate harmony in their own ranks; they should first agree as to the nature of those errors, and cease to vibrate among themselves, one moment for us, and another against us, as our several principles and institutions become the successive objects of inquiry. Before they can justify their rejection of a valid episcopacy, and precomposed forms of prayer, they should submit some system better adapted to preserve Christians from the endless divisions and heresies to which their rejection has given birth. Before they can call upon us to renounce these two apostolick institutions, still retained by nineteen twentieths of the Christian world, they should present us with unquestionable evidence that their own renunciation has been greatly countenanced and blessed by our Father in heaven.

Such evidence can never be gathered from the sacred volume. Their disjointed opposition, and the invisible church for which they contend, as I have already reminded you, are far too obnoxious to this argument of our blessed Lord: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to DESOLATION; and every city or house divided against itself SHALL NOT STAND.' Nor can it be obtained from the records of ecclesiastical history. 'The posterity of all those, who, at the period of the continental reformation, failed to reform in the visible church; who discarded the wheat with the tares, episcopacy and forms of prayer with the inventions of men, have almost invariably declined from the true faith of Christ; and every subsequent schism has either followed the example, or is, at this moment, furnishing strong indications of being finally overwhelmed in the same heretical vortex.

As the subject possesses a melancholy interest, and is worthy of our most serious consideration, I shall proceed to as brief an examination as is practicable. You must be



sensible, that our Christian brethren are constantly adverting to their religious prosperity, as infallible proof of the divine blessing being poured out upon their various churches. The argument is plausible, and, if limited to what may be discerned at a given place and a given period, it would probably prove unanswerable. But I would take a more enlarged view. I would not deny but that many persons have been individually blessed, in a state of schism continued in through ignorance. Our Saviour accounts for it, where he says, ‘He that is not against us is for us.’ Paul also observed, ‘Some indeed preach Christ even of ENVY AND STRIFE, and some also of good will.’ He could not, therefore, have refrained from condemning the conduct of the former, and yet his conclusion is, ‘Notwithstanding, every way, whether in PRETENCE, or in truth, CHRIST IS PREACHED; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.’ If envious and contentious preachers, then, were instrumental in doing some good, in the days of Paul, we need not be surprised at the successful preaching of some modern schismatics; we need not wonder, but have reason, after the manner of Paul, to rejoice in the certainty, that there are numbers of pious believers attending upon their ministry, who, upon full conviction of being separated from Christ’s mystical body, would gladly repair to it, and renounce all their prior prepossessions. Christians like these would, therefore, give to any society, call it by what name you please, a religious character, and so long as they survived, or their successors retained their principles, the Almighty would not fail to bless their personal efforts to run in the way of his commandments. Little, however, does this avail to convince me, that he has ever bestowed his blessing upon the cause of schism, as distinct from the individuals who have undesignedly fallen into its embraces. It would be contrary to his word, declaring ‘that there should be no schism in the body.’ It would convert him into the God of disorder instead of order, and, including all the sectaries, of strife and hatred, of error and every evil work, instead of peace and love, of truth and holiness.

I shall, therefore, endeavour to persuade you, that this apparent religious prosperity, on the part of some of our

seceding churches, is not to be regarded in the light of a permanent blessing from heaven. For this purpose, let us recur to the past, and connect it with the present, premising that I am not arguing with protestants generally, but with those of them who are disposed to entertain the same sentiments with us, upon the prominent doctrines of the cross. Where, then, I ask, was episcopacy first abandoned? You have heard that it was in Germany and Switzerland, and will remember that the deviation was justified by the leading reformers, on the sole ground of necessity. And what have been the effects? What great and glorious advantages have resulted to the present inhabitants of those countries, so distinguished in the annals of the protestant faith?

I am content, brethren, to submit their actual condition to the most orthodox of our opposers, and when it is known, you must be satisfied, that they would fain destroy this page in the history of their church. The anti-catholick part of Germany is, at this moment, completely subdued to the UNITARIAN faith. There it is, that the presbyterian societies have yielded to what their brethren, in this country, would denounce as a most detestable heresy. There it is, that the most eminent divines of that school have had their origin; and from thence it is, that their works have been dispersed throughout the protestant world, enjoying the highest reputation with all, for their critical acumen, and, with many, for their liberal theology. It reminds me of the declaration of Melancthon, before quoted: 'I would to God it lay in me to restore the government of bishops. For I see what manner of church we shall have, the ecclesiastical polity being dissolved.' He anticipated tyranny, but it has eventuated in what he would have considered infinitely worse than tyranny.

And do not the same principles triumph in Switzerland? Where are the presbyterian churches founded by Calvin, at Geneva? Nearly all, with their branches, have become unitarian. Scarcely one of them has escaped the infection. Long ago, Rousseau triumphantly remarked: 'The pastors of Geneva are asked if Jesus Christ is God; they dare not answer. They are asked what mysteries they admit; they

dare not answer. A philosopher casts upon them a haughty glance; he sees through them; he discovers them to be Arians, Socinians; he proclaims it, and thinks that he does them HONOUR. Immediately, alarmed, terrified, they assemble, they consult, they are agitated; they know not what saint to call upon; and after manifold consultations, deliberations, conferences, the whole terminates in a nonplus, in which is neither said, **YES, NOR NO.**'

But Rousseau, like Voltaire, who bore similar testimony, was an arch-infidel, whose malignant exultation requires to be corroborated by unexceptionable evidence; and unhappily we have it, in the person of Dr. Raffles, a very distinguished dissenting clergyman of England, who visited Geneva in the year eighteen hundred and seventeen. Speaking of this city, he says, 'The shortness of our stay did not allow us, indeed, to see any of its society; and the information, I had previously obtained of the state of religion, was not such as to excite in my mind very exalted expectations of pleasure from that source. Few of the doctrines, and little of the spirit, which once rendered it the glory of the protestant world, now remain; and that truth, which was asserted and maintained by Calvin, a name to which the city of Geneva is more indebted for its celebrity, than to the grandeur of its scenery, the beauties of its lake, or the stern character of its ancient independence, has scarcely an asylum within its walls. The pastors of its churches are, **ALMOST TO A MAN**, Arians or Socinians. A few, perhaps, may cherish the genuine principles of the reformation, and feel their influence. I know, indeed, that this is the case; but they bear no proportion to the majority, who are sunk in infidelity and skepticism, and can do but little towards the diffusion of that divine light, and the spread of that glorious gospel, by the resuscitating energy of which, the church of Geneva may again awake from the philosophick dreams of infidelity, and emulate the zeal, the piety, and the simplicity of former times.'

Out of the mouth of an adversary, we are, therefore, enabled to prove the pernicious tendency of the presbyterian system. It has failed, eminently failed, in the very place

it was first brought into existence. There, indeed, as I have learnt from an eye-witness, the sabbath has become, in the popular sense, a holyday, being principally devoted to recreation and pleasure, to the games and sports of the season. And does this look as if God had blessed the innovations of schism? Can protestants, embracing similar views of the divine character of their Saviour, and of the solemnities to be observed upon the sacred day, arrive at this conclusion? It is impossible. We may and we ought to cherish kind and benevolent feelings towards all the members of the human family; but not to the extent of countenancing the errors of their faith, or the obliquities of their practice.

Passing from the continent to England, the scene is not materially changed. The persecution of Mary drove many of the reformers abroad; and when they returned, on the accession of Elizabeth, some of them began to propagate the Geneva system of doctrine and government. Zealous and ardent in the cause, they at length obtained the ascendancy. Before the death of the first Charles, presbyterianism had supplanted the established church, and a fair experiment was made of its capacity to promote the cause of the Redeemer.

I will give you the result in the language of Edwards, one of its warmest advocates, and to his death, far from being instructed by the evils it had been instrumental in producing; evils that, in his address to the existing rulers, he thus freely condemns: 'You have done worthily against papists, prelates, and scandalous ministers, in casting down images, altars, crucifixes, throwing out ceremonies, &c.; but what have you done against heresy, schism, disorder, against seekers, anabaptists, antinomians, brownists, libertines, and other sects? You have made a reformation, but with the reformation have we not WORSE THINGS come upon us than we had before, as denying the scriptures, pleading for toleration of all religions and worships; yea, for blasphemy, and denying there is a God? You have put down the common prayer, and there are many among us that are for putting down the scriptures. You have broken the images of the Trinity, and we have those who oppose the Trinity. You have cast out bishops and their

officers, and we have many that cast down to the ground all ministers. You have cast out ceremonies in the sacrament, as the cross, kneeling at the Lord's supper, and many cast out the sacraments themselves. You have put down saints' days, and many make nothing of the Lord's day. You have taken away the superfluous maintenance of bishops and deans, and we have many that cry down the necessary maintenance of ministers. In the bishops' days we had singing of psalms taken away in some places, conceived prayer, preaching, and in their room anthems, stunted forms, and reading brought in, and now singing of psalms is spoken against, publick prayer questioned, and all ministerial preaching denied. In the bishops' time popish innovations were introduced, as bowing at altars, &c., and now we have anointing the sick with oil; then we had bishoping of children, now we have bishoping of men and women, by laying on of hands. In the bishops' days we had the fourth commandment taken away, and now ALL TEN are taken away by the antinomians. The worst of the prelates held many sound doctrines, and had many commendable practices, but many of our sectaries deny all principles of religion, are enemies to all holy duties, order, learning, overthrowing all.'

Yes, brethren, you are here presented with the thoughts of a celebrated presbyterian divine, describing circumstances, which transpired under his own observation. And does this look as if God had blessed the introduction of schism in England? To me, it wears an entirely different aspect. To me, the rapid organization, at that time, of about sixty different sects, many of them the most loose in principle and in conduct, clearly indicates, that when its floodgates are once opened, there is not wanting all manner of heresy to threaten the destruction of every thing sacred, and every thing divine. Even at this day, where is it that unitarianism flourishes, in the land of our fathers? I answer, where the liturgy is discarded, and ministerial parity is maintained. Buchanan, a man not to be suspected, as you may readily suppose, of speaking without authority; Buchanan tells us, that 'the presbyterians, in the west of England, and some other sects,' 'are said to have become Arians and Socinians to a man.'



And need I inform you, that in our own country, they have long since made their appearance, and broached their doctrines among the descendants of the PURITANS; that they have appropriated to themselves the first of our literary institutions; and that they are every day becoming more and more popular with those that exclaim against our church, her ministry, and her worship? Mistake not, however, the nature of this argument. I do not mean to abuse unitarians. For many of them I entertain a very sincere and cordial esteem, and though I cannot concur in their opinions, thinking them extremely dangerous and fatal, yet are they not amenable to me, yet must I leave them to be judged of Him, who judgeth righteous judgment. But when I am told that the seceding churches are eminently blessed of God, I adduce these facts, and appeal to the orthodox of every denomination, fairly and dispassionately to weigh them, having their understandings enlightened, and their consciences probed.

And are they not facts? Is it not true, that wherever the presbyterian polity has been long introduced, it has invariably proved the entering wedge to innumerable divisions and heresies; to those mentioned by Edwards; to those which characterize our own age, and even our own neighbourhood? Upon this subject, are we not merely to examine the present state of the church technically called presbyterian, but all those that have gone astray under the auspices of her ministerial parity and extemporaneous worship; and that, still adhering to these modern inventions, have the same valid title to the epithet, presbyterian? Undoubtedly, brethren, such is our proper course, and when pursued, it reveals all these, as so many facts impossible to be successfully denied or repelled. Far be it, then, from our church, to be blessed in this manner. We desire not to thank the Lord Most High for any such changes in the system of truth and order, to which we are attached. In mercy he has hitherto withheld them, and in mercy may he continue to withhold.

There is not a single protestant episcopal church upon the face of the earth, where heretical doctrines are either introduced into its creed, or permitted to be inculcated

from its pulpits ; and the peculiar character of our institutions is such, as to afford the surest guarantee, that they never will. Our bishops constitute the first barrier against them. Comparatively few in number, and consecrated at an age when their judgments are mature, and their principles are known to be firmly established, they are not likely to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine ; they are not likely to experience a material change in sentiment ; and, contrary to all modern example, one or more of them must change, before our episcopacy can be conveyed to the promoters of any heresy.

Our invaluable liturgy is another and invincible barrier, against the introduction of the more dangerous errors. For what would a congregation think of that minister, who, after addressing the throne of grace in the words, ‘O God the Son, Redeemer of the world ;’ ‘O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God ;’ and repeating the prayer to be delivered from God’s ‘wrath and everlasting damnation ;’ What would they think of him, if, after this, he were to deliver a discourse controverting these solemn truths, and attributing their present existence to the weakness and superstition of a former age ? You must admit that no congregation could possibly endure him ; they could not countenance such flagrant inconsistency. And hence, among other things, the value of our liturgy ; hence the seal of silence it imposes upon lips that might otherwise prove reprobate concerning the faith. Our inferiour clergy, as well as others, may be hypocrites and dissemblers with God ; but so long as they continue to minister at our altars, they cannot publicly decry the doctrines recognised in our forms of prayer. They must first leave us, and if they leave, not having episcopal authority, they cannot build up a heterodox episcopal church.

Not so, however, with our presbyterian clergy of any denomination : Their extemporary prayers may be accommodated to any opinions, and should those opinions cause the dissolution of their connexion with a particular sect, they can still propagate them in another, with the same supposed right to ordain successors in the ministry, that

they enjoyed before. A circumstance, which I consider as a very material defect in their system, when compared with our own. With us, the liturgy alone is an admirable preservative against the inroads of schism. They have none, and to adopt the exclamation of the celebrated missionary to the Indies, 'Wo to the declining church which hath no gospel liturgy!' With us, the ordination of a bishop is essential. With them, there is the like authority vested in all their ministers, and this has been, and is, the fruitful source from which all the churches, corrupt in doctrine, have obtained their pastors. This is the reason, that, while they have been uniformly restrained to presbyters in rank, they have not had it in their power to boast of a single bishop having united himself to either of their communions. The inference is obvious. So far as heretical opinions have found their way into the reformed churches, we have had no agency in their introduction. The fault lies at another door. Not one of them is episcopal. They are all presbyterian, in their external features. They have no other than a presbyterian ministry. They are, indeed, as universally opposed to bishops, as their more orthodox brethren, and freely unite with them in denouncing the office, as one of the relicks of Roman usurpation. And most willing are we to bear the reproach; most clearly do we discern, in our freedom from all the blameworthiness connected with the origin and continued existence of their errors, that God has deigned to bless his true apostolick church with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

I know not, brethren, what value you may attach to these considerations, but with me, they possess an intrinsic weight and importance, which I could wish to have presented in a yet stronger light. Not that I would detract from the personal piety of others, not that I would charge, upon the present members of a particular church, all the evils, to which your attention has been directed. It would be equally absurd and unjust. It would betray a spirit equally illiberal and malicious. And yet, to the system embraced by their spiritual forefathers, I am forced to attribute the vast variety of sects, with their attendant

errours, which now deform the face of Christendom, and mar the otherwise transcendent beauty and simplicity of the protestant faith.

If wrong, I am deceived by a long series of events, that it is impossible for me to interpret, in a different manner. If right, then it is but too certain that our Christian friends are far from having been blessed, to the extent they imagine, in the persevering support of their ecclesiastical polity. They may examine their own hearts, and, as true believers in Christ, desirous of promoting his glory, and their own salvation, they may enjoy a large amount of real felicity. They may contemplate the local communion to which they belong, and perceiving it to abound with congenial spirits, they may from this circumstance derive an additional fund of gratification. But let them look abroad, where their beloved church once flourished, alike fair and beauteous to the eye, and ‘how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!’ Let them anticipate the coming of a few more years, and the same defective system may produce even here the same disastrous results. Let them now cast their eyes around, and, although they may have reason to be thankful, for their individual attainments in religion, yet must they be dissatisfied with the general prospect; yet would I ask them, if numbers of their fellow men may not be involved ‘in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,’ owing to those numerous defections from the primitive church, to which their own has been proved to have led the way?

It is by broad and extended, and not by narrow and limited views, that they should determine the great question, whether they have, or have not, been blessed of God. It is by inquiring, not of their prejudices, but at the tribunal of their consciences, What would, in all probability, have been the existing state of the Redeemer’s kingdom, had there been, from the dawn of the reformation, no schism and no heresy? I can easily conceive that it would have been infinitely more flourishing, more thronged with the faithful and penitent, and therefore more adorned with grace and glory. They may not credit it. They

may think their discernment more acute, their judgment less liable to err, and may continue in these opinions, until the curtain falls, and the truth is ascertained in a quarter, from which there is no appeal. For one, I am content to abide the issue, by remaining where I am. I desire no more authentick testimony to convince me, that, however unworthy of the honour, it is in the bosom of the church, founded by Christ and his apostles. If any other could be proved to have done more worthily, to have embraced purer doctrines, to have exhibited greater devotion to our common Lord, to have enjoined upon its members a closer walk in all holy obedience, or to have received higher evidences of the divine blessing resting upon it; I would not hesitate to enter its sanctuary, and declare myself of its communion. But persuaded by a long course of reading; persuaded by personal experience and observation, of its utter impracticability, here will I live, and here will I die, blessing God for his unspeakable benefits, and commending my own, and the souls of all my fellow men, into the safe keeping of the holy Jesus. AMEN.

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## SERMON XIX.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

To the argument already presented, unfolding, as I apprehend, in a very conclusive manner, the evils flowing from the first presbyterian schism, it may be added, that the variety of opinions which prevail amongst protestants, upon the subject of revealed religion, has proved a serious obstacle to its general reception. When invited to accept



the gospel of Christ, men are extremely apt to reply, You Christians differ so much, and in some instances so materially, in relation to its principles, that we of the world scarcely know what to believe, and of course what to embrace. On the one hand, the trinitarian system demands our assent, and on the other, the unitarian. Here, some zealous Calvinist enforces the doctrine of God's predestination of whatsoever comes to pass, and there, the equally zealous Arminian denies the dogma, and earnestly contends for the free and uncontrolled agency of the human will. Here, the pulpit resounds with the sentence of eternal reprobation pronounced against the wicked, and there, the soft, cheering voice of universal pardon and forgiveness salutes the ear, and anticipates the final entrance of every soul of man, within the blissful regions of life and immortality. And so the contrast might be run through the thousand variant and opposing doctrines, which disturb the peace and harmony of Christendom. We would fain learn the truth, inasmuch as we are told that the truth shall make us free. But when the learned and talented disagree; when the hand, and tongue, and pen, of every man are lifted against his neighbour; when polemick divinity has usurped the empire of reason, and thrown a veil of darkness and uncertainty over the records of inspiration; Who shall decide? Who resolve the doubts, that force themselves upon the inquiring mind? Who serve as a pioneer to clear away the rubbish from before the eye of faith, and put us in possession of the sure word of prophecy, the genuine and uncorrupted oracles of God?

Yes, brethren, this is the common language of mankind, the familiar argument, with which many justify their delinquency, in not taking up the cross of Christ. Their vision is distracted, their thoughts perplexed, their understanding darkened. As if placed at the extremity of the subterranean labyrinth of Arsinoe, where no less than twelve palaces, and three thousand chambers, by their intricate windings, confounded every attempt to revisit the busy haunts of men, they imagine themselves lost in a spiritual labyrinth of conjectures, without a clew to retrieval, without a cynosure, the shining of one bright

and brilliant star, to guide them, in safety and in honour, to the destined port of heaven.

I feel the plausibility, more than the plausibility, I feel the weight of this train of reasoning ; it bears hard upon us ; in our present divided state, there is no little difficulty in giving it such an answer, as shall prove satisfactory to the more intellectual portion of the community. But were all orthodox Christians united, in the one true church of Christ, were the fundamental truths of inspiration only to be found within her pale, and not entertained in common with a single sectarian denomination, we might with far greater ease repel the argument, and effectually put down the crest of skepticism of this description. We might not, indeed, agree upon the merely speculative topics of divinity, about the divine decrees, for instance ; but, then, we might assert, with invincible force, what is even now true, that upon such subjects there is room for honest diversity of sentiment, when the nature and character of that revelation is considered, which alone justly claims to be divine.

You can scarcely fail to remember that Peter himself, speaking of the epistles of his beloved brother Paul, expressly says, ‘In which are some things hard to be understood.’ And without entering into a minute investigation of the particular points alluded to, I am content to inquire in general terms, if there is any good and valid reason to object to this partial obscurity, designedly, if you please, investing the inspiration of heaven ? Are there not two volumes containing all things material for us to know and understand ? That fair volume, wherein our great Creator shines pre-eminent in power and glory ; wherein his voice, as the voice of many waters, is heard amid the strife of elements, and his goodness, richer than mines of gold, is seen to float upon every breeze, and sparkle in every ray of light ; to descend in the shower, and rise with the verdure, that cheers, enlivens, and sustains the heart of man ? That brighter and more glorious volume, wherein the soul is taught its value and its powers, its august creation in the image of God, and its future destiny, when, after being in the prison of this world, brooded and quickened

by the Holy Spirit, it shall eventually burst 'yon ambient, azure shell,' and tread the courts of heaven?

Inquire, then, at the shrine of nature; and can ye unfold her secrets, the precise manner in which she performs her cunning work? How the sun repairs his rays, or the diamond acquires its crystal hue? How the minutest atoms of the air, the ocean, and the land conspire to bring forth all that is beautiful to the eye and gratifying to the taste? No, no, you can do no such thing. There is here a limit to the deepest research, a point beyond which the inquiry of the proudest intellect is completely baffled. You cannot satisfy yourselves; you cannot control the faith of others. And is this universally admitted? Is it proved beyond a doubt by innumerable theories, contradicting each other at every turn, and producing as many schools in philosophy, as were ever marshalled in the province of theology; how could the skeptick wonder, should orthodox Christians of the same church differ, on the purely speculative concerns of divinity?

Our blessed Saviour did not manifest the like emotions of surprise, in his nocturnal interview with Nicodemus. He rather knew too well the infirmity of the human mind, and addressed him thus: 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?' Even his own inspired apostles did not always agree, or why the controversy between Peter and Paul, upon the subject of circumcision? And so with real, genuine, unaffected believers; they might continue to vary as they now do, in their construction of numerous passages of the scriptures, not essential to be understood in their remote causes and relations, and upon which a diversity of views would be far from working death eternal; since it might be always traced to the mere fallibility of the human mind, and instead of exhibiting a wanton rejection of the divine counsels and authority, it would only show, that were they perfectly clear and unveiled in such particulars, not one sound of intellectual discord would be heard within the pale of the true Zion; in every thing, her altars would be distinguished for concord, as well as for love. She would be one and undivided

upon the prominent doctrines. Unanimity would be her motto, and her emblem, the full, free, and undistinguished communion of the faithful followers of Jesus.

Even now, I grant that the divided opinions of Christians ought to present no insurmountable obstacles to a practical reception of the gospel. I grant it, from the consideration, that all, who really deserve the name, unite in the essentials of our common faith. If St. Peter tells us of Paul's epistles, that they contain 'some things hard to be understood,' he still reminds us of the character of those upon whom this obscurity exerts a pernicious influence. These are his words: 'Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.' And what is wresting, but perverting to improper uses? What is intended by the epithet, unlearned, but being ignorant of the great principles of the doctrine of Christ? What, by the term, unstable, but being tossed to and fro, by every wind of doctrine? What is the extent of this perversion, this ignorance, this instability? Men of this description wrest not merely the language and the reasonings of St. Paul, but also of the other scriptures, to their own destruction. They come not to their study with reverence and docility; with submissive minds, ready to be informed and guided by the teachings of the Spirit; with open hearts, prepared to honour and receive with meekness the ingrafted word. They rather come as captious criticks and conceited sciolists, determined to array their own intellects, their own reason, their own wisdom, against the intellect, the reason, and the wisdom of God. What more, then, can we expect of such vain and arrogant pretenders, but that they should always dwell on mysteries; that they should cavil about 'the secret things,' which 'belong to the Lord our God,' and stumble over those which, the prophet tells us, 'are revealed, and belong unto us and our children forever?'

It is, certainly, thus with all the determined skepticks of our age. They perplex and weary themselves with subjects far beyond the ken of the proudest intellect; while many, possessing a nominal faith, are too apt, as it is writ-

ten, to be 'proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness.' Whereas true Christians have ever repaired to the study of holy oracles, with the sole object of ascertaining the inspiration of their origin, and the divinity of their Author. And having satisfied themselves, upon these all-important particulars; having found Him whom their souls loved, they have bowed with reverence to his sceptre, and faithfully treasured up in their hearts all those sayings and doings, which are too clear and explicit to be otherwise than ignorantly or presumptuously misunderstood.

If any man insists that our future condition is foreordained without foresight of faith and obedience, they know that the righteous, and the righteous only, are predestinated to life eternal. If it is said that a few sighs and tears, heaved and shed in a dying hour, will always ensure the divine pardon and forgiveness, they know that an early repentance, bringing forth for a long time fruits meet for repentance, will assuredly be followed by the salvation of the soul. If a knowledge of the precise instant, when the heart is changed and the affections purified, is deemed an indispensable prerequisite to the Christian character, they know that 'the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit;' and that to be born of the Spirit, no matter when or where, is the all-momentous evidence of our having made our peace with God. If a hue and cry is raised against faith on the one hand, or against works on the other, they know that wherever the gospel is preached, both combined are absolutely essential, in order to enable us to lay hold upon its most precious promises. If the character and the redemption of Christ are controverted, as to his divinity and the vicarious nature of his sacrifice, they know that the question is asked and answered by St. John, 'Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth



the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:’ they know in whom they have believed, and only look for the mercy of God unto eternal life, through the merits and obedience, the sufferings, death, and atonement for sin of Him, who, throughout the pages of inspiration, is commended to our faith and love, as the Saviour of the world, as possessing the only ‘name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.’

Yes, brethren, ask the pious and the godly in this world, those whom you could not hesitate to pronounce sincere, faithful, and practical Christians, and they will all concur in the belief of these great and glorious truths. Differing, as they do, about many questions upon things for them too high, and even in as favourable an opinion of each other as could be wished, they will yet universally coincide in these cardinal features of the gospel, and pronounce of all, who maintain and conscientiously act upon them, that they are the true children of God, and the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Notwithstanding minor discrepancies in opinion, notwithstanding what I believe to be honest shades of difference, in the interpretation of obscure passages of the sacred volume, I can, therefore, upon such ground, urge all men to embrace these fundamental principles of Christianity, and so embrace them, that, according to the apostle, ‘Being made free from sin, and become servants to God,’ they may have their ‘fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.’

Even now, I can enforce the same result from the consideration, that however Christians, whether nominal or real, may disagree about the import of the bible, it still contains the words of truth and soberness. I will explain my meaning, and the use to which I intend to apply it, by illustrations drawn from the mysteries of nature. Philosophers have entertained different opinions about light and heat, about gravitation and magnetick attraction, about the cause of the tides, and the reason of the earth’s revolving round the sun, in an elliptical rather than a circular orbit. But let them speculate and decide as they please; let us range ourselves on the one side or the other

of their numerous theories, it must still be evident to the most superficial observer, that all these operations of nature exist; that light is pleasant to the eyes, and warmth exhilarating to the body; that, let the exact centre and principle of gravity or magnetism be ever so uncertain, heavy substances are still drawn to the surface of the earth, and the needle in the direction of the pole; that the tides of the ocean still ebb and flow, with their accustomed regularity; and that our planet still performs its annual course, producing, with its obliquity to the ecliptick, the seasons and their change. And why? The discordant opinions of philosophers effect no alteration in the established laws and properties of matter. Nature remains the same, whether they continue or abandon their experiments, whether they penetrate her secret recesses, or are forced to loiter in her vestibule.

So, also, in relation to the religion of the bible: Is it in reality the word and the will of God; the revelation of his own glorious attributes and perfections; the counsel of his wisdom, in whatever relates to our duty towards him, our neighbour, and ourselves? Let men construct ever so many variant creeds; let them go on denouncing each other for bigots and fools, with a hundred times the zeal and impetuosity they are now prone to indulge, and still, within the lids of that precious volume there will remain the imperishable truths of heaven; they cannot mar them by their intellectual combats; they cannot, as our Saviour says, 'make one hair' of their heads 'white or black;' how much more, then, shall they not fail to change the unchangeable fiat of Omnipotence, by presuming to 'put darkness for light, and light for darkness?' To attempt it, is indeed the height of folly, the most extravagant of all the extravagant absurdities of which humanity is susceptible. We might as well hope to move the earth by our tread, or to blow out the lights of the firmament with our feeble breath. Against the bible, as against the church, the gates of hell shall not prevail. We have the power, the honour, and the veracity of God to sustain it, and the consequence is, that, long after creation shall return to the original void out of which it was spoken into existence,

its truths, its good tidings of good, shall accompany the spirits of just men made perfect to those blessed mansions, where, in the presence of the Father of Lights, there will be no errors to distract, no discrepancies of sentiment to reconcile, no voice of discord to interrupt the harmony of congenial souls.

And now I ask you, what is the fair, the only honest inference to be gathered from a statement clear, obvious, and convincing as this? Trouble yourselves less and less about the doctrines and opinions of others. By your own, are ye to stand or fall in the day of judgment. Remember the words of Christ, reproving the anxiety of Peter to fathom the future destiny of John: 'What is that to thee? Follow thou me.' 'Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.' If it were possible to enter into heaven, under the wing of some highly gifted mortal, ye might do well to consult him as your oracle, to bend your own to his interpretation of the word, and yield implicit reliance where reliance would be justly due. But as it is, when the soul that sinneth, it shall die, when the man that errs, he alone shall account for his errors, I entreat you to take the bible into your own hands, and to peruse it as for the life of your souls, rather than with impressions weakened by the clashing opinions of others, were they infinitely more repugnant and contradictory than they are. You cannot peruse it long, provided you accompany that perusal with earnest prayer to God for the illumination and guidance of his Spirit, without perceiving that its more momentous truths lie within a narrow compass; that they speak plainly and directly to the heart; and that it is impossible to withstand them, without experiencing self-reproach and self-condemnation. Whereas, the slightest yielding is the commencement of that good work, which God hath promised not to leave unfinished. It is the incipient movement of the giant, faith, to cast off the shackles that confine you to the servitude of sin: of that faith, which, as its power increases, and its liveliness improves, accelerates in the same ratio its ascending march, until, proceeding from strength to strength, it, at length, produces 'the work of righteous-

ness,' which 'shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.'

And then, what will ye care for the harsh, incongruous notes of polemick divinity? What will ye care, if opposing sectarians prefer that the weapons of their warfare should be 'carnal,' and not 'mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds?' Ye will indeed weep over their errors; ye will pray God to remove their blindness and asperity, and to implant within them 'a new heart and a new spirit.' But if they yet persist to fold the shadow and cast away the substance of religion, their speculative controversies will prove lighter in your estimation than the dust of the balance, instead of furnishing the smallest pretext for abandoning the service of your God and Saviour, for apostatizing from his word of life, and renouncing the riches of his grace.

Nor must I omit to mention that, even now, I can prove the exceeding folly of being induced to neglect religion, owing to the distracted opinions of its professors, by adverting to the fact, that this circumstance affords no refuge to the sinner, when the snares of death encompass him around; when, smitten by the hand of the Lord, and stretched upon the bed of languishment, he feels, and trembles as he feels, that a few hours will terminate his mortal strife, and dismiss his soul to its long and dread account. For, in this exigency, provided reason retains her empire, to what topics of divinity does he bend the listening ear, on what rely, as embracing within the narrowest scope the essence of the one thing needful? Talk to him about the technicks of theology, those abstruse and metaphysical questions to which I have referred, and which from the time of Calvin have been the fertile sources of much of that ill omened hostility and uncharitableness, so prone to rankle in the bosom of the mere religionist, and you broach a set of themes, that appear no better than a mockery to his alarmed, despairing soul. Talk to him even about the minor truths of Christianity, and they are entirely incompetent to compose his fluttering thoughts and faltering heart. I do not mean by this to depreciate their real, intrinsick value, in the season of health and

vigour. But still, what are they to the poor sinner, in the very act of shaking hands with death, compared with the higher and more experimental doctrines of religion?

Alas, brethren, the time has become too contracted, and, therefore, too precious, to be lavished in their discussion. He wants to learn the nature of that repentance, whereby he may conciliate the divine mercy and forgiveness, through Christ. He wants to listen to some scriptural views of that faith, whereby he may yet range himself beneath the banner of Jesus, and cast all his cares, all the sad and intolerable burden of his sins, at the foot of the Redeemer's cross. He wants to hear explained the few remaining tests left to persons in his condition, whereby, through earnest self-examination, he may investigate the state of his soul, and ascertain what prospects float before his eyes, what hopes he may cherish, what internal demonstrations he may have, that God has been very good and gracious to him, that the wounds of his peace are healed, and the avenue opened to his future enjoyment of the blissful presence of his God.

He wants to hear of these, and of nothing else. These are the themes, the only themes fitted to engross the thoughts, and chain down the attention, of the dying sinner. And oh, what contempt do they not pour upon the larger number of those contests of words, those heart-burnings of envy, and jealousy, and malice, which divide and embroil the professed followers of the Lamb! Bear witness, ye that are now in paradise. Ye cannot communicate your minds to us, but we know as certainly, as if they were plainly revealed and submitted to our inspection, that ye are amazed at the retrospect of those enormous trifles, in which ye were once partially engaged, and to which men are now so prone to devote the chief labour of their hands and hearts. Bear witness, ye also, that are doomed to dwell in the reverse of paradise. The secrets of your dread habitation are alike incommunicable to us, but with equal certainty do we know, that ye would give the wealth of worlds, had ye never stumbled upon that mountain of calamity and ruin, the wretched, miserable contentions to which the gospel of peace has been per-



verted; had ye remained uninfluenced by these convulsions, and prepared yourselves, by a cordial reception and practice of more heavenly things, to appear among the redeemed in Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads.

Allow me, therefore, brethren, to entreat you to profit by these easily to be imagined disclosures proceeding from the world to come. While here below, liable to be enticed and drawn aside by the metaphysical collisions of Christians, there are unquestionably 'some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.' But remember, that were it possible to gain the most accurate knowledge of their true nature and character, they are of a description not calculated to advance our progress a single step towards the attainment of the joys and immunities of heaven. Remember, that the goodness, the mercy, the justice, and the righteousness of God, all of them forbid the idea, that he should wrap in obscurity, or seclude in mystery, one particle of that truth, which it would be life for us to know, and death, eternal death, not to understand. So far from this, 'light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' According to the faithful and true witness, 'this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.' Not, however, to the extent of prying out and resolving all his ways; although even here there is something analogous to what painters term the 'clare-obscure,' enabling us to see, as through a glass darkly, some faint and glimmering rays of the glory which shall be revealed. But still enough to know, that he is our Maker and Preserver, the Author of all present and future happiness, our reconciled God and Father in Jesus Christ, the God who has promised to reward the obedient, and to punish the transgressors: Enough to know, of his only begotten Son, that he is the Redeemer of the world and the Saviour of sinners, our Mediator and Intercessor with the Father, the Bread of Life and the Propitiation for our sins, the gracious Being to whom we have only to look in faith and obey in sincerity, in order to be saved.

Oh, then, that we might never be induced to neglect so great salvation; that we might be zealously engaged to work it out with fear and trembling, with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. To others, we should devolve the task of settling curious questions, and unprofitable dogmas; to others, the too daring presumption of dwelling exclusively upon the many 'things hard to be understood,' as if they constituted the life and soul of religion. But, for ourselves, humble and lowly in our own eyes, penitent, believing, and obedient in the sight of God, we should 'press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;' we should covet earnestly the best gifts, and, obtaining them, in the way of God's appointment, we should live the life, and we should die the death, of the righteous.

By such arguments as these, I can, therefore, even under existing circumstances, satisfactorily to myself, and I trust to you, obviate every supposed objection to our divine religion, growing out of the unhappy divisions and animosities subsisting between brethren professing the same faith. My object, indeed, has been to present them in such a manner, that infidels themselves might feel their force, and surrender at discretion what I am willing to consider the strongest of their citadels. But after all, what are the most powerful arguments in their eyes, what in the estimation of even less determined adversaries to the truth, when they believe that a confused medley of sects, by their irreconcilable opinions and bickerings, furnish ocular demonstration, that a religion productive of such dissensions cannot proceed from the God of order, and harmony, and peace? I tell you, brethren, that as men are more struck by the visible heavens, for the very reason that they are seen, than by the invisible, so are they more affected by the religious discord they behold, than by the religious concord, which the bible exacts. They adopt, indeed, a very good rule, if applied to other subjects. They judge of Christianity by its effects; and shame and confusion of face be upon us, that this divine system of truth and holiness will not stand the test, in the important particulars of mutual love and charity, for no other reason than this, we

are determined to be divided, notwithstanding Christ our Saviour prayed, 'Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be **ONE**, as we are.'

With whom the fault lies, I have shown you. It is not with us. We adhere, and, with our views, cannot cease to adhere to the church established by the apostles, under the direction of Christ, and the supervision of the Holy Ghost. Our orthodox fellow Christians have either cast it away, or they are the successors of those who did, and hence the necessity of their returning to its bosom, before the infidel can be reclaimed, and made to give up the strongest argument, he is enabled to wield against the truth of the gospel. Let them do this, and for the reasons assigned, I am content that they shall bring with them their purely speculative opinions. I am more anxious for an agreement about the facts recorded in the scriptures, and intended to command universal obedience. Let these be acknowledged, received, and acted upon, by the leading denominations of the protestant faith; let the precomposed public worship of the bible, let the church of the bible be embraced with mind, and heart, and soul, by the presbyterians, the congregationalists, the methodists, the baptists, and I dare engage that not many years would elapse, before open and disguised infidelity, before unitarianism and universalism, with every false way, would yield to a Zion, thus augmented in numbers, and, as Ignatius said, 'composed to unity.' It is that fatal schism which he denounced, as Paul denounced it, and which arrays so many orthodox Christians against each other; it is this that gives strength, and confidence, and audacity to the free-thinkers and hereticks of the age.

At present, they are chiefly sustained in their errors by our wretched feuds and jealousies; by the spiritual wars we wage; the intolerant and vituperative language we employ; the proselyting plans we concert to thin each other's ranks; the fire and fagot system we maintain against the souls, if not the bodies, of equally honest believers in Christ. And all this because churches of human origin have crept in amongst us; because whatever in re-

igion is founded upon the devices of man's understanding, invariably calls up, in some shape or other, the bitter feelings and vindictive passions of our nature ; because schism, even in its most favourable aspect, is, in the judgment of Paul, one among the many fatal lusts, which war in our members. ' For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men ? For while one saith, I am of Paul ; and another, I am of Apollos ; are ye not carnal ? ' But could we only contrive to unite under the banners of the true apostolick church, could all the faithful and godly combine to come out, as one man, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, I am persuaded that his blessing would so crown our labours, that the great enemy of souls would receive a blow more fatal to his cause than any inflicted since the foot of Christ was planted upon his head, at the hill of Calvary.

Pray ye, therefore, Christians, ye children of the promise, wherever located, pray ye, in the sincerity of your souls, for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love her. Crush the monster, schism, and her direst earthly foe will be crushed. Resolve that she shall enjoy this advantage over her adversaries, and your own eyes shall behold the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. AMEN.

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## SERMON XX.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

WITH the present discourse will terminate all the remarks which I designed to submit in defence of the

church I love, the institutions and the doctrines my head and my heart approve. Throughout the discussion, I have endeavoured to keep within the rules of decorum, to avoid all satirical, as well as insulting, language, and to make no assertions which were not capable of being fully sustained, either by unanswerable proofs and authorities, or by the fair and legitimate deductions of reason. If I have erred in manner or in matter, it has not been intentionally, neither with the inclination to lead astray, nor the wish to wound the feelings of a single individual, that bears and loves the Christian name.

Most cordially do I agree, that invective is not argument; that ridicule is not the test of truth; that unfounded statements recoil with invincible force upon such as dare to enlist them in their service. If there were no higher and holier motive to influence my conduct, and guide me in the way I should go, a just estimate of worldly policy would alone teach me, that in the end, candour and sincerity, forbearance and charity, ever triumph over artifice and fraud, inveterate rancour and bitter revilings. By foul language and envenomed epithets, no man hath yet approved himself to the conscience of the enlightened Christian. To authority he will bow, to reason he will lend a willing ear; but let the bigot rave, and the slanderer riot in detraction, he will not be the creature of their fashioning, nor the recipient of their bile.

No inducement, then, have I to follow their example. None that can be good, and none that is bad. I do not calculate to laugh a sectarian out of his prejudices, and I know that he will never relinquish them at the nod of disdain, or the sneer of reproach. Arguments, however, must not lose their weight, from being too tamely expressed. There is an air of holy boldness that should mark the language of truth. It proceeds not from a wavering, dubious mind. Its object is not to deal in ambiguous phrases, to trumpet forth an uncertain sound, and beguile the favouring smiles of all sorts of men. But its speech, though seasoned with grace, is firm and decided, free as the air it breathes, and uncompromising as the principles it advances. When did Jesus of Nazareth ac-



commodate his sayings to the passions and prejudices of the multitude? When did he flatter their vanity, or attempt to heal the hurt of the daughter of his people slightly? In him, brethren, there was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. His maxims, his doctrines varied not with time, place, or circumstance. He had not one for the scribe, and another for the publican; one for the high priest, and another for the pharisee: By such means, buying golden opinions from all, and on no account venturing to stir a debatable question, or oppose a long indulged and favourite error. But he could speak with plainness, and expostulate with freedom, though his mission was love, and his merciful goodness as unlimited as the universe.

With his example before my eyes, I have, therefore, no apology to offer for the fearlessness with which I have breasted the tide of popular sentiment, and exposed errors imbibed in infancy, and cherished to manhood and even declining age; no apology for urging, with zeal and inflexibility, opinions derived from the scriptures, and that I conscientiously believe to be true as God is true. My heart acquits me from all sinister designs. I am not ashamed upon this subject to avow the most secret sentiments of my soul. I know that it is not polluted by a hostile feeling towards the person of any man. I affirm with confidence, that it is not imbittered by a vindictive temper towards either of the various denominations of Christians. But where they do err, surely it is my duty, without impeaching their motives, or detracting from their piety, to canvass their principles. Where they do entertain and propagate unfounded views of the church of the living God, it is my privilege, as well as my duty, to vindicate her from every unjust aspersion, and contribute all in my power to exhibit her, in her true light, uncontaminated in doctrine, and unsullied in glory.

In the preceding effort, it is not, however, my weakness to believe that I shall succeed to the extent I could wish. I am too sensible of the nature of human bias; how tenacious we all are of our youthful predilections; what extraordinary energy of character it requires to disabuse

the mind of their influence, however wrong. I am also aware that those very features of the church, which serve to recommend her most strongly to the affection of her children, are precisely those least adapted to conciliate the esteem of the modern religionist. He either wants something more rigid and austere to the eye, or he is too excitable, of too enthusiastick a temperament, to be gratified with her grave appearance and moderate sentiments. She is too cheerful in her piety for some, and too cold and lukewarm for others! With either class she has too little, while with the men of the world she has too much, religion! But, to her praise be it spoken, she is in no danger of being dashed in pieces upon Scylla, or of being engulfed in Charybdis. She neither mistakes pretension for faith, nor freethinking for liberality; a demure countenance for a renovated heart, nor the love of the world for the love of God. Avoiding all extremes, she is rather devout without pomp, and faithful without boasting; glad without gayety, and rational without licentiousness; in a word, exactly calculated for sensible, judicious, and pious Christians. I care not what may be their condition, or what their profession; whether they are rich or poor, learned or unlearned, addicted to the labours of the head or the work of the hands. I only ask for good minds, divested of prejudice on the one side, and disposed to investigate on the other; to read, think, and judge for themselves and I am certain, that the church, and all which she receives and contains, will meet with their warmest approbation.

This is emphatically the age of inquiry. Its spirit has gone abroad. It is actively and unremittingly employed, in the various departments of art and science; and religion must and will receive a large share of its attention. When Christ declares, that 'whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be his disciple,' intelligent persons will not be satisfied with adhering to any opinions, upon the sole ground of their having been the received opinions of their ancestors. Such a principle would continue the larger portion of mankind in a state of heathen superstition to the end of time. If they will not hear Christ, and be

influenced by the doctrines which are according to godliness, because their progenitors would not, or could not, then are they destined to bow the knee to Baal, until the world, and the fashion thereof, shall have passed away.

But is this desirable? Can there be any Christians disposed to acquiesce in the propriety of this decision? Let them, then, evince their disapprobation, by discarding the self-same doctrine from their personal creed. It is high time to look at things as they are, and not as gilded over and mystified by preceding generations, however honest and worthy. It is high time to strip the evil genius, schism, of its meretricious dress, and expose it, in all the naked deformity of its features. The intellectual and reflecting are not so deeply committed, as to be incapable of bursting their bonds, and paying their homage, at the shrine of bible truth. A calm and dispassionate view of the existing dissensions, and respectively hostile attitude of the numerous religious sects, will be sufficient to convince them, that all this cannot be the work of a God of love and harmony; that other traits should distinguish the true 'people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand;' that they must surrender their human systems and human churches, and acknowledge that the reformed world requires to be reformed anew.

But how is this to be effected? By recourse to the bible, and, where the bible is susceptible of different interpretations, by recurring to the period when unity prevailed, and inspired truth presided, in the congregations of the faithful. As Dryden said,

"In doubtful questions 'tis the safest way  
 "To learn what unsuspected ancients say :  
 "For 'tis not likely we should higher soar  
 "In search of heaven than all the church before."

The disciples of Christ were first called Christians at Antioch, and not at Geneva. And how was the church at Antioch, how were its sister churches of the first centuries, constructed? What was their government, and what their ministry? What their publick worship, and their doctrinal faith? It is by gleaning from such sources, that we can only hope to commence a new era in the history

of Christendom, and, therefore, have I availed myself of their combined testimony ; therefore, have I clearly proved, that when the church was established and ordered, in strict conformity to the scriptures, and as we would have it established and ordered, that, then, there existed peace, and harmony, and love ; that all genuine Christians were of the same mind ; could worship at the same altar ; could reverence the same ministers of Jesus ; and partake, at one table, of the same flesh and blood of their redemption.

To exhibit a scene like this, in modern times, we must relinquish all that is novel, and revive all that is old, in religion. We must repair the many breaches that have been made in the walls of Zion, and restore her to the state of original simplicity and purity. For, in divinity, a moment's reflection should satisfy us, that the course of inquiry must be directly the reverse of what it is in natural science. It must be backward, and not forward ; backward to the fountain head and last revelation of God, rather than forward, busied in a vain search for new light and new doctrines : A distinction far from being sufficiently observed, and to whose neglect may be justly attributed all the evils, which have been most unpropitiously grafted into the only pure system of faith and morals. Only look at natural science. It has been constantly improving, because it was susceptible of improvement. The ancients were here comparatively ignorant and stupid. The moderns have far outstripped their lingering steps, and are still barely upon the threshold of what they anticipate will hereafter be discovered, in the revolution of ages.

In religion, on the contrary, an entirely different result presents itself, and, for the very reason, that, when the volume of inspiration was closed, it no longer admitted of emendation or addition. It was perfect, then, as it can be now. Notwithstanding every effort that has been made, by curiously inquisitive minds, it has been, and is, impossible for them to be wise above what is written. Even biblical learning and criticism derive all their value from the success they have experienced, in establishing the authenticity and true reading of the scriptures, as they

were originally possessed and understood by the ancient disciples. And what do protestants think of the corruptions introduced during the dark ages? They reject them as unauthorized and unfounded. They compare them with what prevailed before they soiled the pure ermine of the church, and employ the word reformation itself, because it carries them back to the first and purest ages.

What credit, then, can we give to the more recent floods of light, that have been professedly shed upon the Christian world? Have their adherents improved upon Paul and his brother apostles; upon the doctrines they taught, and the church they founded, under the guidance of Christ and the Holy Spirit? Then is division an improvement. Then is the extracting from the bible doctrines irreconcilably opposed to each other, an improvement. It is a better state of things, that some Christians should maintain, and others denounce, the doctrine of the atonement; that some should assert, and others deny, the everlasting punishment of the wicked; and so throughout all contradictory creeds, it must be a great improvement to be constantly harassed and perplexed with the exclamations, 'Lo, here is Christ,' and, 'Lo, he is there.' But what rational being, what pious believer can possibly embrace such opinions? It is scarcely possible for him, under these circumstances, not to perceive that, instead of improvement, discord and disunion are melancholy spots and wrinkles upon our holy profession; that, instead of progressing, there are many particulars in which Christians, as a body, have retrograded in the race for the heavenly world, compared to what they were in primeval times; and that, to present a brighter spectacle in the eyes of the celestial host, they that have wandered must return to the bosom of the primitive church.

I will not pretend that it would have the immediate effect of evangelizing the world, and producing an unbroken unanimity of sentiment. There would still exist some few deniers of Jesus and the resurrection. The scorner would still make a mock at sin, and the wicked man rejoice in his iniquity. But this I will assert. The



preachers of heresy of every description would gradually become less and less in number, until at length they would be completely banished from the face of the earth. An apostolick ministry, united in one church, would put them down more effectually than any merely human means. I have already shown you, that they are invariably opposed to bishops; and let me now say, that, as the continued dispersion of the Jews is a standing miracle, authenticating beyond all doubt the inspiration of the sacred volume; so does this remarkable fact furnish a scarcely inferiour or less obvious miracle, in favour of the divine institution, and beneficial nature and tendency of episcopacy. If, however, I am told, that there were many hereticks, even in the two first centuries, I answer, that they were uniformly presbyters or deacons, and as uniformly opposed by their bishops. I answer, that Arius, of the fourth century, the most successful and renowned of all the ancient hereticks, was also a presbyter, and that, if he did corrupt several of the episcopal order, his sentiments were condemned, in a general council, composed of nearly three hundred bishops. I answer, that his unitarian doctrines were finally extirpated through the powerful and benign influence of their successors in office; and that, at this very moment, as if to remind us of their origin, they are only publickly taught and enforced by a ministry of PRESBYTERS.

No longer, therefore, let us hear of the dangerous usurpation of bishops. The danger consists in the rejection of their order. Were the maxims of expediency alone consulted, it should obtain the approbation of all the orthodox denominations, and be regarded as one of the most efficacious bulwarks against the dissemination of principles, which they unite in condemning. But we place episcopacy upon higher grounds than those of expediency; we claim for it the sanction of divine authority; and, considering it equally binding with the two sacraments of the gospel, we say to our pious presbyterian friends of all sects, when you can convince us, that they may be rightfully dispensed with, we shall find little difficulty in admitting the validity of your favourite ministerial parity

Until then, while we bid you 'God speed,' as to your personal progress in the way everlasting; while we commend your zeal for heavenly things; and esteem you highly in love for your works' sake, we cannot but regret the countenance you now give, however indirectly and unintentionally, to all manner of heresy and schism; we cannot, even for your gratification, cease to maintain, with earnestness and perseverance, those institutions of our church, which are to be traced to the inspired volume, and that the unanimous testimony of all antiquity ascribes to the immediate agency and direction of the holy apostles.

We rather entreat you as brethren solemnly to pause and reflect upon these things. We cannot refrain from indulging the hope, that diligently examining, and impartially weighing, the many arguments we have to produce, you will ultimately abandon the churches of recent and human origin, and cordially unite with the Zion of the Lord of Hosts. It is a confined and mistaken view, which limits the subject of inquiry to yourselves alone. You must take a broader range. You must contemplate the effects of division, as exhibited in the actual condition of myriads upon myriads of your fellow men, and ask your consciences, if their alienation from Christ, their neglect of religion, their unsound tenets and delinquent practices are not owing, in a great degree, to the unhappy dissensions, so visible in the sounder part of the Christian community. They certainly cannot have the slightest tendency to recommend our common faith, and I am confident, that they are pregnant with incalculable mischief.

If one of your own churches is afflicted and annoyed with intestine strife, you do not fail to deplore the injurious consequences upon the surrounding neighbourhood, as well as its individual members. You ardently long and pray for the restoration of peace and concord. And what is confessedly injurious upon a small scale, you should not fail to perceive, must be eminently more so upon a larger. All other incidental causes combined do not, indeed, so deeply wound the general interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, as the emulations and wrath, the jealousies and heart-burnings the criminations and recrim-

inations of its acknowledged friends. A new convert especially often deems it absolutely indispensable, that he should become the thoroughgoing partisan of his particular sect, and, in too many instances, the offensive epithets, he applies to others, are felt to be the readiest passports to the confidence and approbation of his seniors in profession. And why should you not be equally engaged in imploring of your heavenly Father speedily to remove these evils, as you are those of a less general, and consequently of a less fatal, character? It may be, that upon reflection, you will find yourselves less anxiously intent upon the good cause of union than you ought to be; and we know that secret prayer is rarely offered, and never accepted, unless it proceeds from the heart. We know that, however fervent you may be in your other petitions, you must become alike fervent in this, before the world of sinners are destined to be benefitted by your personal example in giving up a party, for the communion and fellowship of the holy catholic or universal church.

I design not, brethren, by these observations, to afford any just grounds of complaint to our fellow Christians. But faithful, say the scriptures, 'faithful are the wounds of a friend,' and a friend I avow myself to all that are godly in Christ Jesus. In this capacity I speak, in this admonish them, that, no matter how zealously and profitably they may be now employed, in the benevolent labours of love, they could do more as a body towards promoting the everlasting welfare of souls, by the single act of renouncing upon conviction the way of schism, than they will be able to effect, in that state, if their lives could be prolonged to the age of Methuselah, and their charities be multiplied ten thousand times ten thousand fold. If we may safely judge of the future from the past, wherever they erect an orthodox, posterity will behold a heterodox church; wherever they found an evangelical, there will rise upon its ruins a non-evangelical, school. Such has been proved to be the tendency of their ministry and worship; and so confident I am of its being the natural consequence of the system they espouse, that I cannot but reiterate the persuasion, and implore them no longer to

furnish the incipient causes of the future prosperity and triumph of our mutual antagonists.

More than this, I cannot and will not urge. Instead of pursuing forebodings, not more ungracious to them than unpleasant to me, I will advert to another theme. I will bid you call to remembrance all that has been advanced in behalf of our venerable church; and if you concur in opinion with me, that her government and ministry are apostolick; her rites and sacraments, scriptural; her liturgy, devotional and holy; her doctrines, true and righteous altogether; if the arguments submitted have been followed by the fullest conviction of their clearness and force, my chief object has been successfully accomplished, and a foundation laid for the future welfare of this congregation, which, I have every reason to hope and believe, the lapse of time will only operate to increase rather than diminish.

The course I have taken was commenced under the consciousness, that, wherever intelligence exists, abstract opinions are of little value. I knew that you would require proofs; that you would not be satisfied with naked assertions. But I also knew that those proofs were ready to my hand; that they could be drawn from the scriptures, and corroborated from other sources, in endless profusion. And have I succeeded in making a judicious selection? Have I convinced you, by a statement of facts of incontrovertible weight and authority? Now that the work is finished, whatever may be its subsequent fate, I shall not regret the labour it has cost me. Personal feelings and considerations, from which none of us are entirely exempt, should ever yield, in the minister of Jesus, to an ardent desire to accelerate the march of truth on the one hand, and to retard the progress of error on the other. With this desire I have written, and with this, by the divine blessing, I shall publish. Our church, in this western country, has long been the theme for almost universal reproach, a reproach partaking as much of acrimony as derision, and I would fain aspire to the honour of vindicating the purity of her character, and the excellency of her institutions. Opposition may ensue. Invective may be called out. But they neither alarm, nor intimidate, nor

trouble me. Standing upon firm ground, I am conscious that it cannot be swept, by mere dint of numbers, from beneath my feet; and I am powerfully encouraged by the reflection, that whenever and wherever we have met our opponents in the fair, open field of controversy, they have been invariably foiled in their arguments. The reason is obvious. Nothing can withstand the mighty force of truth. Power may crush it for a time. The mists of error may obscure it for a season. But, in the sequel, it acquires strength from persecution, reputation from obloquy, and, like the sun, emerges from behind the clouds to shine out with redoubled rays of light and glory.

While, therefore, upon many accounts, I would gladly waive a religious controversy, and rejoice at being permitted to escape serious animadversion; while I would reluctantly challenge any of our Christian brethren to embark in a contest that might infringe too much upon my usual avocations, yet am I not to be deterred by any fears of eventual discomfiture, from giving these discourses to the publick, and maintaining them, if necessary, with the spirit, the temper, and the intrepidity becoming a Christian, and especially a steward of the manifold grace of God. Come what come may, 'For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.'

In the mean time, brethren, let me persuade you to reflect, that the circumstance of existing within the pale of the very church originally planted by the college of the apostles, and freely watered with their own, and the blood of numerous worthy confessors, so far from exonerating you from the obligation to lead a life of undissembling faith and holiness, should stimulate you to yet higher exertions to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.' If there are any churchmen who speak a different language, they miserably deceive themselves, and are justly liable to the charge of endeavouring to subvert the faith of others. We recognise no such delusive evasions of duty. We would seriously impress upon your minds, that, in proportion to the peculiar advantages you enjoy



you are called upon to measure the extent of your responsibility.

The church provides her members with a valid ministry; and they are so much the more inexcusable than others, if they fail to listen to sound doctrine, and irrefragable precepts. She puts into their hands forms of prayer, to be used in publick worship, which are adapted to all their spiritual exigencies, which will enable them to approximate the throne of grace, and supplicate the Lord, in an acceptable manner; and if, through any disaffection of their souls to him, they are not found to unite in her solemn services, the more severely will they be judged, and condemned for these omissions. She presents them, in her articles and formularies, with as compendious a system of evangelical doctrine, as it is practicable to obtain from the scriptures of truth, wherein they think they have eternal life; and if they do not treasure it up in their souls, and cause it to regulate their constant belief and practice, yet deeper will the sore displeasure of Almighty God be visited upon them, still more intense will be the consuming fire of his indignation.

Never, then, brethren, no never, suffer yourselves to be so influenced by a vain admiration of the external features of the church, as to overlook the strong and emphatick terms, in which she importunes and requires you to 'walk in newness of life.' A more fatal imagination could not beguile you; one that would prove more inimical to your present peace, or more destructive to your future happiness. But in all your principles, and in all your conduct, evince to the world that your attainments in true religion are not to be excelled by the most exemplary Christian, that, among the dissenters, adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour. It is by a faithful and obedient life, a life of heavenly character and import, that you will most effectually 'put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,' and baffle the revilings of those who 'falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.' I am far from insisting upon loud and boisterous professions. I would not encourage a vain and ostentatious parade of graces, which, while they decorate the person, correspond not with the

internal emotions of the mind and heart ; but there are numerous requirements of the law and gospel, through whose strict observance, ye are to become wise unto salvation, and not one of them will I cease to conjure you to obey ; not one of them can be designedly omitted without incurring the greatest of all privations, the loss of eternal life. The church inculcates no other sentiments. They are inseparably connected with the pure and holy living she exacts ; and if ye bear true love to her, then, will ye not hesitate to make those sentiments your own, then, will ye gladly inure yourselves to that pure and holy living.

On the whole, brethren, no one possessed of reason to discriminate, and the opportunity to judge, can for a moment question the pre-eminent excellence of our beloved Zion. She may be calumniated by bigots of severe and contracted minds. She may be derided by enthusiasts deranged in their intellects. She may be denounced by skepticks having ‘an evil heart of unbelief.’ But neither separately nor combined, by craft nor by violence, will they be able to prevail against her, to undermine her foundations, or level her bulwarks to the ground. By the liberal and unprejudiced ; by the sober and considerate ; by the wise and good ; she will ever be regarded, as ‘A CROWN OF GLORY IN THE HAND OF THE LORD, AND A ROYAL DIADEM IN THE HAND OF HER GOD.’ They will perceive that, for long ages, he has been her shield and her buckler, the impregnable fortress of her strength, and the lofty tower of her defence. They will appropriate to her, as I have done, the prophetick language of Isaiah’s vow ; and, although its more brilliant accomplishment may be deferred to the days of millennial felicity, then, at least, will it unquestionably appear, in the sight of men and angels, that HER RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS GONE FORTH AS BRIGHTNESS, AND HER SALVATION AS A LAMP THAT BURNETH. AMEN.

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